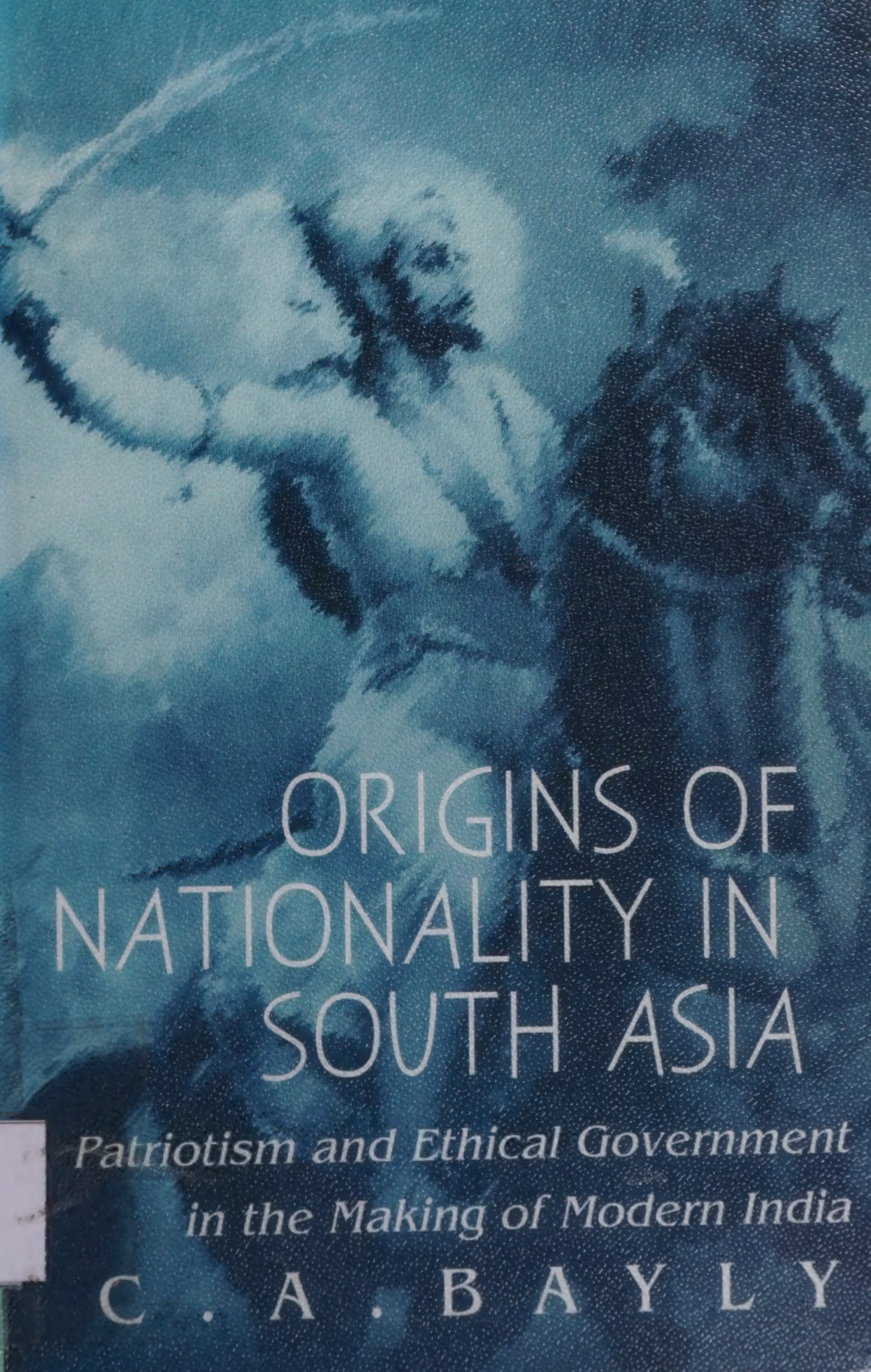
ORIGINS OF
NATIONALITY IN
SOUTH ASIA
Patriotism and Ethical Government
in the Making of Modern India
C. A. BAYLY

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in South Asia

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John Mansfield 2002

Origins of Nationality in South Asia

PATRIOTISM AND ETHICAL GOVERNMENT IN THE MAKING OF MODERN INDIA

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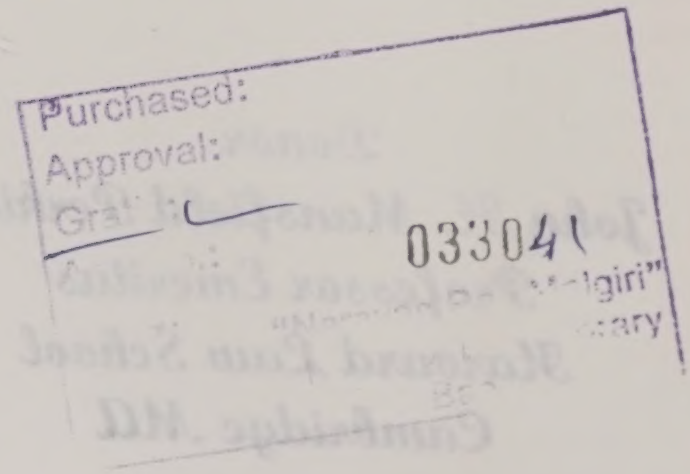

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Preface

The four chapters on patriotism and nationalism which form the heart of this book were originally given as the 1996 Radhakrishnan Lectures in the University of Oxford. I am grateful to the Trustees of the Radhakrishnan Trust for honouring me with the invitation to give the lectures and to the Warden and Fellows of All Souls' College for their hospitality during the course of my stay. In many ways President Radhakrishnan was a most appropriate presiding spirit for the ideas which I wanted to try out in the lectures. He was, above all, a great Indian patriot but one very firmly embedded in the culture of his native Tamil Nadu. He was especially concerned to explain and develop critically what he saw as the great and living tradition of Indian philosophy, religious ideas, philology and ethics. At the same time, he sought to project those ideas in a scholarly form through debates in the academic and public arenas of the West and of westernized India.

The work on patriotism and nationalism represents a development of themes touched on in my two monographs, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars. North Indian Society During the Age of British Expansion, 1770–1870* (1983, 1st Indian edition, 1992) and its more recent companion volume, *Empire and Information. Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996). The former dealt with the social context of economic change in north India during the period of transition to mature colonialism. It ended by suggesting that some, at least, of the texture of modern Indian civil society was owed to the tradition of corporate rights and governance inherent in the organization and ideologies of the traditional Indian merchant communities. *Empire and Information* was, by contrast, concerned with the communication and formation of knowledge in Indian society during the transition to British rule. It argued that

> while modern Indian history should certainly not be depicted as a single grand narrative culminating in the emergence of nationalism, the density of social communication demonstrated by this book does, in fact, help to explain why political leaders in a poor country with a relatively low rate of general literacy should have

been able to create a widely diffused and popular nationalist movement so early [p. 2].

While Marshall McLuhan's hoary 1960s' adage that the 'medium is the message' retains some truth, it was still worth asking in a more sustained fashion: What were the political and social messages transmitted along the networks of informants and intelligencers which seemed to be such a striking feature of pre-colonial and early colonial India?

Finally, the concerns of this book look back to questions that emerged thirty years ago from my doctoral work on the city of Allahabad. In the *Local Roots of Indian Politics, Allahabad 1880–1920* (1975), I wrote of networks of older institutions which sustained the early Indian National Congress in Allahabad. These included the credit lines of Indian commercial people, Muslim sufi orders and the clienteles of river priests, renouncers and pilgrim guest houses. Such institutions clustered densely in a city which was an ancient centre of Hindu pilgrimage and Muslim learning as well as a product of British modernity centred on its High Court, University and European civil station. The antecedents, or prehistory of nationalism, remains as legitimate an area of study as the 'prehistory of communalism', an area into which I strayed controversially some ten years ago.

Since then the study of Indian nationalism has moved in a radically 'modernist' direction. In the 1970s and 1980s, following wars with Pakistan, India's intervention in Sri Lanka and the storming of the Golden Temple at Amritsar in a harsh act of internal pacification, Indian liberal and left opinion became increasingly suspicious of the degree to which the state, beneficiary of the Indian nationalist struggle, appeared to be the inheritor of the centralizing and unitary traditions of European state building and the fervid nationalism to which this had given rise. Theoreticians and polemicists such as Ranajit Guha, Ashis Nandy and Partha Chatterjee began to write of the 'illegitimacy' of Indian nationalism and the Indian nation-state and to castigate its 'derivative' character. The suspicion of nationalism became almost universal by the late 1980s and early 1990s when the Indian state seemed to stand unmasked as an ally of dangerous right-wing Hindu revanchism on the one hand, and international business on the other.

At the same time, there has been a shift in more strictly academic understandings of the roots of Indian nationalism. In the 1960s and 1970s, the reaction against old imperial historiography led many scholars, particularly in the American academy, to stress indigenous values and indigenous constructions of society. The American Social Sciences

Research Council led the way here with a programme to indigenize Indian studies and locate the particular formation of the 'South Asian mind'. That in turn brought its reaction. In several studies everything once associated with 'India'—Hinduism, caste, the structure of the family and Kshatriya kingship—have been taken to be 'colonial constructions'. One of the most interesting detailed studies of the emergence of modern Indian politics is Douglas Haynes' *Rhetoric and Ritual in a Colonial City* (Berkeley, 1991). It is easy to over-simplify this rich work. Haynes clearly emphasizes, for instance, the way in which traditional merchant-caste Vaishnavite pietism contributed to the Gandhian ideal of self-sacrificing service of the nation, so connecting earlier class formation and ideologies with an important strand of nationalist thought. On the whole, though, he emphasizes the capture of elite Indian politics in the nineteenth century by the discourse of western liberalism and improvement. He reports that he found little evidence in early nationalist thought and political culture of either organization or ideology which reflected deeper local traditions. This was the more striking in a city where the older merchant and artisan communities apparently had, as his book reaffirms, survived better under colonialism than those of Bengal and eastern India.

This book attempts to push the tiller in the opposite direction from these modernist critiques of Indian nationalism in the hope that the boat will eventually find a truer course. It does not dissent from the claim that much of modern Indian nationalist organization and ideology was consciously or unconsciously derived from western exemplars, especially as it was reflected in the central organizations of the national struggle. It does, however, insist that the particularities of Indian nationalism have to be understood in the context of Indian forms of social organization and ideologies of good governance that pre-date the full western impact even if they, in turn, had been modified by colonial rule. This book does not take an emphatically 'primordialist' line. It does not argue that there was some essence of 'Indian-ness', let alone 'Hindu-ness', whose manifest destiny was slowly revealed through time. It does, however, challenge the drastic foreshortening of history which is implied in many recent critiques of nationalist modernity.

The book employs the term 'patriotism' to describe the sense of loyalty to place and institutions which bound some Indians, even in the immediate pre-colonial period, to their regional homelands. The word patriotism is an ambiguous one in European studies. It is used to describe archaic loyalties to community and institutions and an emerging sense of

nationality. At the same time, it is sometimes taken as an analogy, in popular conversation, to the perfervid nationalism associated with the national state in its most modern form. The fascist British National Party of the 1930s, for example, claimed to be patriots. The analogy I wish to suggest in the Indian cast is with the former phenomenon: the deeper, more malleable sense of commitment to honoured forms of polity and society. I am interested in the way in which this sense of the virtues of the particular kingdom or people related to and diverged from the wider values of rational political ethics which were a pervasive discourse of early modern India.

Alongside the four central chapters of the book, there are republished five of my essays (reproduced as chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 here) from the past seventeen years which relate to similar themes. The earlier of these, in particular, inevitably display different stresses from the Radhakrishnan Lectures. But they have not been adjusted or rewritten as this would have been a rather artificial exercise. Some divergent spellings and transliterations have been retained, reflecting the period and place of their publications. In order to update them to some degree, however, I have appended brief notes to them indicating developments in the historiography since they were written. The book ends with a short autobiographical and historiographical epilogue which, I hope, will allow the Indian reader to understand the vantage point of these essays more easily.

All the very large numbers of scholars, librarians, research students and critics who have helped me over the years deserve renewed thanks. But in this exercise, I have some particular debts to record. An early version of this argument was given at the annual Mayer Lecture in the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I thank the Department of History for inviting me to lecture and Sidney Mayer for his generosity in setting up lectures and posts for historical study on both sides of the Atlantic. I am glad to say that he both attended the lecture and entered a polite and constructive dissent to some of my arguments, which helped in the rewriting. The seminars and the lecture audiences in the following places have also been helpful and constructively critical: Auckland, New Zealand; the Universities of British Columbia and Victoria, Canada; and the Global History Seminar, Oxford University. Some individuals who have helped greatly with substantive critiques or material are: Professor Muzaffar Alam, Dr Bridie Andrews, Professor Sugata Bose, Dr David Brading, Professor Barrie Dobson, Professor Alan Knight, Dr Polly O'Hanlon, Dr Norbert Peabody, Professor Terence Ranger, Anil Sethi and Dr David Rudner. As ever, I owe an intellectual debt to my wife, Dr Susan Bayly,

who helped me refine the arguments and improve the expression. Finally, I must thank Rukun Advani and Bela Malik of OUP India and the Press's anonymous readers for their encouragement in publishing this work. The book is dedicated to Professor Sarvepalli Gopal, inheritor of the great liberal tradition of Indian historians, who launched me on my career of writing about India.

St Catharine's College, Cambridge C.A. BAYLY
June 1997

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1

Patriotism and Political Ethics in Indian History

These essays reconsider the origins and periodization of Indian nationalism from the perspective of late-pre-colonial history and the history of early-nineteenth-century British India. They argue that the Indian national movement which emerged in the 1870s and 1880s drew upon and recast some patterns of social relations, sentiments, doctrines and embodied memories which had come into existence before British rule was established in the subcontinent in the late eighteenth century. These ideologies and social relations had already been refashioned in the course of a century's conflict and polemic between British rulers and Indian subjects by the time the first Indian National Congress met at Bombay in 1885. One of the tasks of the next generation of research will be to construct a fuller intellectual and political history of India that transcends, but does not erase, the old boundaries between medieval and modern, Company, Crown rule and Independent India.

The precursors of Indian nationalism are referred to here as the 'old patriotisms' and 'political ethics' of the Indian homelands. These were neither unchanging antique identities, nor monolithic manifestations of popular resistance. Rather, they constituted a set of distinctive doctrines, ideologies and patterns of communication which had assumed a more defined form since the seventeenth century in the context of the decline of the Mughal Empire and the emergence of regional Indian kingdoms. Indian patriotisms and political discourses concerning right government already existed in the early days of the British Indian Empire, when British nationality itself was still being forged in the British Isles and in the colonies. Aspects of British and Indian political identity were created contemporaneously and through mutual conflict.

The argument concerns historiography and the history of ideas because it attempts to describe how successive generations of Indian commentators understood and contested sentiments of attachment to land

and local custom in the political realm. But it also depicts earlier Indian patriotisms and political debate as active forces in the construction of later nationalisms—regional and all-India—rather than simply as symbols to be reinvented at will by late-nineteenth-century nationalists. The central aim of the book, therefore, is to interrogate and refine the notion of the 'invention of tradition' in the context of the history of nationalisms. For, as Eric Hobsbawm himself observed of his influential collection, *The Invention of Tradition*: 'Our aim was never to claim that *all* traditions were invented.'[1]

Modern Indian nationalism which solidified in the context of western institutions and international capitalism was evidently of a different order from earlier forms of regional and community patriotism. Nevertheless, these political forms did have some features and locations in common. Old patriotisms created conceptual realms, clusters of institutions and popular sentiments which facilitated the rooting of later nationalism. This challenges the view that Indian nationalism was in every respect a recent phenomenon and one entirely derived from, or at least subordinated to, 'modern' European forms. For, while televised soap operas throughout Asia and a few ultra-nationalist publicists trace the roots of Asian nationalisms back to the beginnings of time, most historians of Asia continue to see nationalism entirely as the product of modernity, and embarrassingly for them, this is a very recent and almost wholly colonial modernity. Historians of modern India are apparently unable to see any political forms between those of decentralized, traditional society and mass, modern nationalism, other than the experience of colonial rule.

This creates a highly problematic historical narrative. In pre-colonial India, it seems, there were powerful states, notably the Mughal Empire. Society, however, was made up of loosely nestling bundles of communities, with fuzzy borders and no strong sense of common identity. Nationalism, accordingly, was a 'derivative discourse' and any indigenous elements in its ideology were subordinate and neutered. There was no popular nationalism to speak of before 1900. Instead, society was structured by feudal relations—loyalties to dynasties and warbands, temple-based polities, or elementary aspects of subaltern resistance. Even Ashis Nandy,[2] who asserts that there was a pre-colonial Indian social order, wholly different from and antipathetic to the modern western state, locates its essence in decentralized local communities, not in active political sentiments or in theories of government. After 1900, however, the contemporary consensus records, a western-derived nationalist

discourse penetrated and achieved hegemony over the elites and populace in the small towns and countryside with remarkable speed.

The problem, as even some proponents of this view have seen, is that it denies Indians agency in their own history. It makes them into second-class nationalists or blind devotees of the western nation-state, a devotion which cannot easily be explained in these accounts. Ironically, it echoes in modern sociological language the nineteenth-century view that Europe was the only moving force in world history, sweeping away Asian and African despotisms and their primitive societies.

The recent stress on the absolute modernity and colonial origin of the sense of nationality also sits awkwardly with parts of the pre-colonial historiography of India. The work of historians such as Romila Thapar,[3] Hermann Kulke[4] and R.S. Sharma[5] has linked the growth of the state in India to the emergence of a sense of territoriality at different levels, from the locality to that of the wider region such as Bengal, Maharashtra or Tamilnadu. Of course, colonial and nationalist policies and ideologies of the nineteenth century made the sense of subjection to an empire, province or state very much more precise and exclusive than it had been in these earlier periods. By counting people and extracting revenue from them on a formulaic pattern the colonial state made it much clearer what it was to be a 'Punjabi' or a 'Maharashtrian', for instance. By demanding rights for people along the lines of 'linguistic regions' after 1920, the Indian National Congress similarly transformed the meaning of regional cultures and made them more absolute. All the same, the link between these earlier emergent identities and the sense of belonging to and fighting for Indian nationalities in the freedom struggle needs closer investigation. What modernity did was to transform and redirect these emergent identities rather than to invent them *ex nihilo*.

Nor is it adequate to suggest that the patriotic identities which existed before the late nineteenth century were simply the preserve of dynasts and warriors, while ordinary people were relegated to feudal passivity or destined only to mobilize along class lines. Besides the studies which have linked the development of the state to a sense of territoriality, European observers and more recent anthropologists have sporadically discerned popular patriotisms in India which seem to have little relation to the claims and activities of the modern state. Words of some antiquity exist in most Indian languages for a concept analogous to western patriotism: solicitude for one's own land. In Marathi and Hindi there are *swadeshabhiman*,[6] *deshbhakti*[7] and *swadeshhitkari*. These terms

themselves seem to date back to the early nineteenth century. They had already registered the presence of the West, for they emerged from early contact between missionary dictionary-makers and the Indian learned, but they pre-dated the emergence of modern nationalism by several generations.

Significantly, though, these words themselves were also cognate with older concepts which imply rootedness to a particular territory. The land, *desh*, was lauded in many early ballads. In the late nineteenth century that key word *swadeshi* was, of course, annexed to the vocabulary of radical nationalism. Again, the words *swarajya* and *watan* began by meaning the home domain of a particular ruling dynasty. Yet they came to be invested with a sense of pride in belonging to a particular territory long before swarajya and *wataniyat* were used as words for 'independence' and 'patriotism' in the nationalist lexicon. Finally, the populations that lived in these homelands were often described by those infinitely flexible words for 'a people': *jat*, *jati* and *qaum*. In indigenous theories of moral worth as much as in popular discourses, particular 'classes of people' had already been invested with special virtues and particular identities before these words came to be applied to the inhabitants of the modern national state.

European and Asian Avatars of Patriotism

A comparative strategy will be essential in tackling this major gap in Indian historiography because the questions to be asked are essentially comparative ones. It is useful to consider how the notion of patriotism has been developed by European historians and then apply it as a heuristic tool. This does not imply a simplistic application of inappropriate European models to Asia, only the creation of a field for debate. It involves the search for homologies that might be expected to exist where two huge tracts of humanity were undergoing changes which historians accept were similar and interlinked.

In what ways ought European history provide a stimulus for debate? Several European historians and historians of the settler Americas have used the term 'traditional patriotism'. This phrase describes the sense of attachment to the territory, custom, political and religious institutions which had developed in parts of the western world before the rise of plebiscitary nationalism, the doctrine of popular sovereignty and the modern state. It was this 'gut' patriotism that Robert the Bruce in Scotland and Joan of Arc mobilized against the English invader.[5] Traditional patriotism existed beyond and outside feelings of loyalty to a particular dynasty. It existed before the rise of the modern state, print capitalism

industrialization and urbanism and the other forces which have been seen as the generators of modern nationality. Traditional patriots distinguished themselves from each other by allusions to differences of manners, style, language and institutions.

According to most historians, by the seventeenth century, statesmen and theorists had drawn upon classical and Christian sources to superimpose on this traditional patriotism a set of doctrines about liberty, civic virtue and good government. David Brading, a historian of Latin America, has called these doctrines 'rational patriotism'. This, he argues, embodied universal ideas applicable to all states: rational patriotism complemented the traditional patriotism of the regions with a universalizing agenda.[9]

In western Eurasia and Latin America rational patriotisms developed as a group of particular local applications of the broad theory of classical republicanism. Rational patriots lauded republican virtues derived from Greek and Roman models which they understood to be embodied in their particular constitutional structures. Within these constitutions, ancient corporate interests were represented. The rational patriots of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries feared the loss of liberty to dynasts and over-mighty subjects, or its corruption by illicit wealth and overseas conquest. They celebrated a link between land and people, but, for them, the land was still not closely delimited, as it came to be in the territorial nationalisms of the nineteenth century. The ideas of popular sovereignty and plebiscite democracy, key components of the modern nation-state, were absent from rational patriots' thought.

The notion of patriotism has had an uncertain passage in the last century of Western debate, but its rediscovery in the European context is of significance for historians of India. In the eyes of nineteenth-century historians in both continents, patriotism had been a natural essence of history. According to them, deep in the womb of the middle ages, sentiments of communal attachment and political structures had been born which would carry forward the 'race genius' of its people. Whether in the universalizing civilizing mission of a Macaulay, Michelet or Herder (or Ranade in India) or in more parochial visions of the people in arms, patriotism was the stuff of history. For such writers the nationalisms which came into being with the formation of the nation-state after the French Revolution were natural developments of these patriotic demiurges. In the eyes of liberal writers, though, tyranny and enthusiasm could easily transform 'good' patriotisms into aggressive chauvinism, as occurred during the French Revolution.

The wars of the twentieth century associated nationalism more

closely with extremism. Its precursor and vital component, patriotism, came to be viewed with equal suspicion. In the British case, patriotism was believed to be too closely associated with unthinking support of the status quo or empire loyalism. It was too far implicated with jingoism and warmongering to be taken seriously by historians or other thinking people. The Marxist tradition, with E.P. Thompson at its head, paid little attention to the role of patriotic themes and organizations in bringing together different sections of the population across the fissures of class.[9] This was curious because in Britain there had been a continuing tension between a popular mobilization and political rhetoric based on class and one based on patriotism. The popular patriotic imperialism of the mid-eighteenth century emerged at the same time as the making of the English working class; the jingoism of the late 1890s and early 1900s coincided with the first flexing of muscles by organized labour.

If many historians before 1960 ignored or buried class conflict in their analyses, those after 1960 tended to ignore or bury patriotism because it was too embarrassing for them. The learned justification of this was that ideologies and social relations of production, including class, emerged from modes of production which *really* existed because they could be empirically observed. Class was real, whereas patriotism was mere factitious sentiment. This cannot be sustained. For, even if we assume that material forces are in some sense more 'real' than perceived social collectivities (which is doubtful), patriotic ideas and organizations also derived from developing social and economic communities based on material forces. These communities brought together merchants and workers, capital and labour, rentier and tenant. The national market was an essential component of emerging nationality. Arguably, too, the political and economic effects of patriotic organization, especially during wartime, have been as great if not greater than those of class mobilization. They certainly seem to be as long-lasting.

So in British history patriotism had to be rediscovered as a historical force by historians across the whole political spectrum. This occurred in the work of Raphael Samuel,[11] Linda Colley,[12] J.C.D. Clark[13] and Clive Emsley[14] during the 1980s, a decade which witnessed a contemporary decline in class politics alongside the persistence of patriotism. Yet, in these historical works the definition of patriotism had changed. In its new guise, it was seen as a contingent and constructed phenomenon, not as an essence. It was a social response to particular political situations and particular conjunctions of economic relations, rather than a natural, let alone benign, force.

A similar tendency was apparent in other western historiographies beyond the British Isles. Historical celebrations of the bicentennial of the French Revolution reinstated popular, cross-class patriotism and played down the role of class war, which had been so obtrusive in earlier Marxist analyses of the period.[15] Similarly, studies of peasant rebellion in mid- and late-nineteenth-century Central and South America began to explain these movements as patriotic upsurges against foreigners, expressing central popular values, rather than as jacqueries and class wars.[16] Irish nationalism was increasingly interpreted as an expression of cultural and religious values rather than as a war by peasants against landlords.[17]

Outside Europe too, distance from Independence and from the traditional Marxist construction of history made for a more nuanced approach to the question of popular sentiment. The ideology of the Mau Mau Rebellion in Kenya was reinterpreted as a kind of Kikuyu patriotism different in style, content and organization from Kenyan nationalism.[18] African historians have been concerned with the question of whether such pre- and para-colonial patriotisms impeded or facilitated the emergence of later nationalism, or both.[19] As we shall see, this question is also of great importance in the Indian case.

If we now turn to Asian history, then pre-colonial southeast Asia is the area where historians have most readily discerned the existence of analogues with old European patriotism before the colonial era. In the case of Vietnam, David Marr has long emphasized the importance of the idea of 'loss of country' for the scholar-gentry who led, and embodied, the long-term resistance to the Chinese and other dangerous neighbours well before they came into conflict with expansionist France after 1880.[20]

Several historians of Burma and Thailand have also suggested that the norms of reformed Theravada Buddhism and the emergence of standardized ethnic languages combined to produce active processes of identity formation in these countries before the colonial intervention. The Burmese analogy to patriotism was 'love of home' and it embodied a sense of the need for congruence between polity and a loosely defined Burmese-ness.[21] Between 1400 and 1700 that sense of Burmese nationality had grown stronger with the spread of reformed Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka and a standard form of the Bumese language. Successive dynasties strengthened these sentiments of attachment so that, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, further social integration and the policies of the Konbaung dynasty (1760–1886) had significantly eroded the differences between Upper and Lower Burma and between ethnic Burmese and other local peoples such as the Karen and the

Kachin.[22] Foreign conquest and foreign danger intensified this sense of nationality. A Burmese prince stated in 1826 as the first British attack on Burma reached its culmination: 'The English have no right to the eastern lands', and, ironically in view of Bengal's later contribution to Indian nationalism, 'We are no Bengalees', to tamely submit to the foreigner.[23]

In the lands influenced by Islam, movements previously described as 'Islamic' have been reinterpreted in local terms. Thus, for instance, the ideology of the Javanese kingdoms was formally Islamic but many of its traditional patriotic themes had been incorporated into it. It was this amalgam which gave such force to the revolt of Dipanagara against the Dutch in the early nineteenth century. He was the 'Just King', his message was imbricated with Islamic Mahdism, but he was also king of a particular land and consort of the Goddess of the Southern Ocean.[24] His movement was more one of Javanese patriotism rather than Muslim reaction.

Why Recent Indian Historiography has Neglected Patriotism

In what sense could traditional patriotism or its philosophical legitimation, rational patriotism, be useful heuristic tools for south Asian historians? Prima facie we might expect to find something homologous in the Asian lands later conquered by European colonial powers. Now that it is accepted that pre-colonial Asia was the scene of dynamic commercial expansion and state building it would seem strange if the creation of wider social communities, sharing institutions, memories and histories, did not accompany these changes.

There are several reasons why recent Indian historians have overlooked the issue. Some of these echo the European situation and some of them are intrinsic to Indian historiography. First, the notion of patriotism seems, on the surface, even more inappropriate to scholars in south and southeast Asian studies working with the concept of segmentary states and hierarchies of power. In the models of state structure derived from African examples and applied by Burton Stein to south and southeast Asia, the segments of the state are usually depicted as passive grids up and down which flow revenue or religiously sanctioned political legitimacy.[25] The king, whether a regional 'little king' or a ruler of the whole subcontinent, such as the Mughal Emperor, has borne the weight of the interpretation of political ideology.

In the same way, some historians have implied that while the great pre-colonial Indian empires had religious policies, which may have been secular or Islamist, their rulers and peoples were not animated by any

particular sense of place, or sentiment of attachment to locality, or doctrine of popular representation of any sort. As for the smaller states, historians have often seen them as dynastic domains carved out by warriors from overlapping bundles of patrimonial rights.

Second, religious or cultural differences between ruler and ruled are tacitly assumed to have diminished the bonds of sentiment. As so often, Sir John Seeley set the tone for subsequent academic writing in his Cambridge lectures of 1882. Muslim rule in India and elsewhere, he wrote, had broken 'the tie of nationality . . . the state lost its right to appeal to patriotism'.[26] Many recent Indian historians and writers on nationalism more generally have seemed content to follow similar lines of argument. This is odd since so many recent writers on pre-colonial and early-colonial Indian religion have argued that syncretic forms of religious practice and belief overrode the formal appearance of confessional difference. Even Islam accommodated to the form of different societies in south and southeast Asia, providing a pool of reference points and forms of organization which could strengthen the structure of old patriotisms.

Religious distinctions did not in themselves constitute an impediment to the development of a sense of patriotism in India any more than they did in Europe. But more sophisticated arguments, designed to prove the modernity of nationalism, have also obscured the possibility that earlier forms of attachment to homeland played an active part in historical change. Liberal theorists of nationalism, such as Ernest Gellner,[27] have followed models of social modernization which stress the importance of literacy and industrialization. Societies which were illiterate and non-industrial, such as India, could by definition aspire to no real sentiment of community beyond village, clan or dynastic realm. By contrast, radical theorists, notably Ranajit Guha,[28] depict colonial India as a little world of villages sometimes ruptured by subaltern or feudal revolts. It is clear that in these constructions of the pre-colonial past, the sentiment of patriotism is excluded from consideration almost by definition.

Current political concerns have perpetuated these silences. The notion that generalized ethnic and religious identities existed in Europe and Asia before capitalism and imperialism is deeply suspect to contemporary intellectuals fighting varieties of religious and racial fundamentalisms. Indian commentators on the left such as Partha Chatterjee[29] or nativizing liberals such as Ashis Nandy have all insisted on the total modernity or the derived character of everything that is gathered under the heading of Indian nationalism. In part this arose from the laudable aim

of refuting the idea that the Indian nation had existed from the beginning of time and was defined and legitimated by its struggle against foreign invaders. This view of the past is dangerous because Muslim and Christian Indians could easily be deemed to be outsiders and it seemed to merge imperceptibly into the propaganda of modern Hindu chauvinists. Yet, to accept that sentiments and doctrines of patriotism might exist alongside and in contention with bonds of clan, micro-region or even class is not the same as accepting the idea that society was rigidly constructed out of primordial identities.

Third, the emphasis in so much work on the ambiguous, the transgressive and the protean in historical communities—on decentred discourses and marginal voices—has made the position argued here somewhat unfashionable. But it is obvious that the very notion of decentred discourses requires the existence of centres, and it is not crude social evolutionism to insist that, in the developing world of commerce and government from 1500 to 1800, Asian societies saw an enlargement in scale not only of trade and government, but also of ideologies and attachments which drew people together across the boundaries of clan and micro-region.

The fourth reason that the usual osmosis of academic concepts has not taken place in the case of patriotism is that most European historians have examined rational patriotism mainly as a series of political theories of high sophistication, largely divorced from the messy compromises of political and social history. In the same way, the history of the application of Indian political theories to political practice remains seriously underdeveloped. Many historians would seem to agree with another of Seeley's assertions: 'The Italians had the Roman Republic behind them. It was by reading Livy to the people that Rienzi roused them to rebellion. No Indian demagogue could find anything similar to read to the people.'[9]

These difficulties appear to me to be less acute than they might seem. Traditional patriotisms in Europe also often developed in the interstices of segmentary states and feudal relations transformed by commerce. They also emerged in the presence of fluctuating religious, linguistic and ethnic distinctions. When the grip of the history of formal political theory is released, our European models seem in practice to have been highly syncretic. Throughout Europe and Latin America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, statesmen and pamphleteers happily stirred classical republicanism—the acme of rational patriotism—into brews which variously contained apocalyptic Protestant Christianity, the cult of Catholic saints, attachment to common rights and corporate liberties, fealty to particular dynasties and concepts of the charisma of the land, which were all more redolent of the older 'gut' patriotism.

Finally, the application of a concept of patriotism to Indian history has been pre-empted by other, less focused but more loaded concepts, those of 'ethnicity' and 'regionalism', which a few scholars have used sporadically to describe broad pre-colonial and early-colonial regional communities. These concepts seem to be too passive and too behaviourist. Despite the close reasoning of Anthony D. Smith[31] and his emphasis on the pre-eminence of culture rather than substance, the word ethnicity (or 'ethnie') is too imbricated with ideas of blood and race. Patriotism implies, by contrast, a historically understood community of laws and institutions fortified by a dense network of social communication generally expressing itself through a common language. It is an active force, capable of being articulated in both a popular and a theoretical form, capable of rousing people of different classes, clans and interests to protect it. The point is to show how these patriotisms could be constantly reinvented as assumed ethnicities rather than taking ethnicity itself as the basis of identity.

Patriotism and Political Ethics in Pre-colonial India

This section goes on to analyse the relationship between Indian homologies of 'traditional' and 'rational patriotism'. Traditional patriotism had fairly clear Indian homologies. Glorification of the land and people itself was deeply rooted in the thought and literature of the subcontinent. The land was, of course, generally represented as female: but despite its gender, we continue to use the words patria and patriotism because both in Europe and India the male and female principles are jointly required to realize the activated spirit of the land. French patriotism, for instance, required the female warrior Joan of Arc, or, later, Marianne. Conversely, in the Marathi ballads of western India, Mother Earth prays for the reincarnation of male warrior deities and heroes to save her from abuse.

In fact, the existence in India of old patriotism in the simple sense of active love of country and veneration of its traditions is not difficult to demonstrate, nor, despite historical silence, too surprising. We have already noted the existence of indigenous words which speak to a concept analogous to it. Pre-colonial histories and annals are also full of stories of the heroic defence of homelands by nobles and people who died in defence of territories, so endowing them with stronger charisma. In the classic case of Rajasthan, Norman P. Ziegler notes that the brotherhood of the Rajputs and the notion of sanctified land were mutually supporting:

> The symbol of this linkage was the *pinda*, a ball of food or clay made either from the sustenance of the land or the land itself, which the brotherhood offered up to

its ancestors who had conquered and enjoyed mastery of the land before them. One finds reference to mortally wounded Rajputs mixing their blood with the land to form *pindas* and offering these up before death.[32]

In many other parts of India royal installation ceremonies included rituals in which kings were anointed with mud made from earth and water taken from the constituent parts of their kingdoms.[33]

Running through the rituals themselves there are also traces of a deeper, though elusive, sociology of land and people. Normative ethical treatises, geographies and histories often seem to be suffused with the idea of universal humoural balance and the notion of charismatic land. In this constellation of ideas, the king, the city, the human body and the land itself were believed to be composed of mixtures of different humours, usually air, fire, water and earth, which imparted to them their special characteristics. A balance of these elements facilitated wise government, social peace and a fecund land. Planetary movements, divine interventions and human emotions were in dialogue with these physical foundations, so that human intelligence could predict, counsel and help balance the body politic. In the Indo-Muslim tradition wisdom in natural sciences, natural philosophy and right government were closely connected, as in early modern Europe. Rulers and intelligentsia were expected to be proficient in 'physic', *hikmat*, but this natural philosophy was wider than mere medicine. It could discern imbalances and bad humours in the city, and in the land.

Similar doctrines are found in texts which emerged from the 'Hindu' tradition. For instance, a treatise supposedly composed by Krishnadevaraya, the greatest king of the Vijayanagara state of the Telugu and Tamil country of south India in the fifteenth century, slips easily between the body and the land. The king should strengthen his kingdom by building temples and feeding learned Brahmins, it counsels, giving gifts to devotees. He should succour its arts and manufactures. He should be:

> ever mindful of the purification of his cities and thus strengthen himself and increase his longevity, just as a man strengthens his own body by consulting good doctors, by learning the properties of the seven *Dhatus* [elements] and by taking medicines compounded with gold and other minerals, by taking food so as to suit his constitution . . .[34]

In such ethical texts, however, the humoural conception of the body politic was complemented by a series of ideas about proper government. These ideas constitute a homology to what European or American

historians have called 'rational patriotism'. These were universalizing ideas about government and the good life, as often derived from sources outside India as from within.

It is important to stress here that ideas derived from these traditions could be interpreted by political actors in radically different ways. Versions of them were annexed to the reforming discourse of self-consciously Islamic teachers, such as Shah Waliullah of Delhi.[35] In a softer and more inclusive form, however, they also came to be applied to the special traditions and institutions of Indian homelands, and to be seen as virtues embodied in a particular land or people. Here again there are analogies with the early modern European situation. In Europe and early America, aspects of the idea of classical civic republicanism were taken up by the Protestant religious reformers in pursuit of a universalizing religious mission. But in another guise they were also embedded in the particular patriotic discourses of the Mexican and New England settlers and the eighteenth-century English 'country party' Whigs. In India also, the homologies of rational patriotisms were appropriated by the makers of law and the transmitters of custom to deepen and rationalize the homologies of traditional patriotism.

This was made more likely because the science of government in the Indo-Islamic world was so much an embodied and physical science. The relationship between politics, ethics and physic is particularly clear in the case of the two most popular ethical treatises which circulated in the Indo-Muslim world, Nasir-al Din Tusi's 'Akhlaq-i Nasiri' and Muhammad Bin Asad Dawani's 'Akhlaq-i Jalali.' The first of these was composed in the thirteenth century in the Mongol court (which made it acceptable to the Indian Mughals despite its Shi'ite, even slightly heterodox flavour). Muzaffar Alam has recently shown in detail how the catholic and flexible norms of this aspect of the ethical literature had a major influence on the ideology of Mughal India.[36] Such works attracted an elite following. In the 1580s, Abul Fazl, the Mughal Emperor Akbar's minister, wrote to the imperial commander-in-chief recommending this class of literature for private study, since ethics comprised the 'essential aim and abstract of the whole realm of science'.[37]

Tusi's Arabic work was translated into Persian by a chief doctrinal official (*sadr-i sudr*) of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Many copies were made during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and referred to by the statesmen of the post-Mughal regional courts. In the nineteenth century the 'Akhlaq-i Jalali' was among the first works to be printed in Bombay and Calcutta and by the Nawal Kishore Press in Lucknow.[38]

This was testimony to its constant popularity, especially as this press was managed by a Hindu family and appealed to Urdu readers in both major religious communities.

The principles of ethical literature were applied by the major rule-making officers of Mughal and post-Mughal government, particularly the registrar (*kazi*), chief cleric (*mufti*) and 'censor' (*muhtasib*) of the markets. These officers were continued even in the non-Muslim polities which emerged from Mughal decline, such as the Maratha states and Ranjit Singh's Punjab of the nineteenth century.

The basic ethical concepts that embraced political and economic morality were shaped by and in turn shaped popular attitudes throughout the Mediterranean world and west, central and south Asia. They incorporated elements of Greek thought, especially Aristotle's *Politics* and *Ethics*, and in the case of the 'Akhlaq-i Jalali', they specifically referred to the wisdom of the Hindus. We are not, therefore, pointing to a narrowly 'indigenous' Hindu or even Islamic code of political ethics, but a universalizing vision of humoural sociology and good government. Aspects of this tradition found specific application in Mughal India. But they were also applied in various regional forms to rationalize and support particular patriotic institutions and traditions.

In such Indian ethical treatises, morality was represented as the actions and beliefs of the rational soul for which virtue consisted in a proper balance between natural desires and emotions. Ethics was the physics of the soul and in the humoural tradition, sentiments, like substances, were seen as hot and cold, wet and dry. As the philosopher Ghazali said, 'Ethics is the alchemy of Happiness' (*kimia sadat*).[39] Ethics encompassed economics and politics. Since ethical and psychological balance was the essence of the rational soul, so in politics the highest virtue was justice, or rather equity. The ruler's duty was to balance the different elements and types of people within the polity and to be constantly open to receiving complaints, settling conflicts and collecting information on bad conduct.

A contention of the present work is that popular ideas of political morality and good government, represented in this ethical literature, remained an encompassing discourse of south Asian politics well into the nineteenth century. These ideas informed political debates and instances of popular resistance under indigenous rulers. They also informed reactions to the policies of British government and resistance to it. Ultimately, some of them passed into and influenced conceptions of popular nationalism and nationality in the nineteenth century.

According to this tradition, whose ideas remained current for nearly three hundred years, the human mind, the human body, the city and the polity were all composite and complementary organizations of bio-moral substance bound by rational self-interest and love. According to Dawani, for instance, 'Men are citizens by nature, and their subsistence unobtainable except through co-operation and fellowship, of which interchange is the indispensable ingredient'.[40] Thus 'the baker should bake bread for the seedsman, while the seedsman sows for the baker . . . the clothier should sell cloth for the weaver, while the weaver weaves for the clothier'.[41] The household was the fundamental unit of society in which the basic control of social norms should be exercised by its head; all governments should respect the integrity of the household. The broader polity should be composed of protectors, learned men, men of substance who provide food and clothing, and honest menials. The king and nobles of good lineage should make sure that all get their due and none overstep the mark. In particular, they should chastise anyone 'seeking more than his right . . . incompliant with the equations of money . . . overstepping the path of rectitude'.[42]

Different classes should keep their proper places in the polity or else 'disturbances dissolve the bond of union'. The rulers should expel those representatives of low occupations from the virtuous city as 'wine-selling, dance-playing and dice-playing', or forestalling the market and purveying black magic. They should also keep at a distance representatives of vile but essential professions such as 'polling, tanning and filth cleaning'.[43] They should encourage charity and limit consumption because 'property and retainers are nothing but deposits, and the time must come when those deposits are to be restored'.[44] Different races (qaums) had different virtues and their corresponding vices: Africans had integrity and steadiness, but would resist 'haughtiness'. Mediterranean peoples were give to parsimony, but might have great integrity; 'Hindus are recommended by aptness of conjecture, but censured for spitefulness, conceit and fraud'.[45]

These ideas overlapped with many ecological and political beliefs current among Hindu learned men and the wider populace. The *akhlaq* injunctions about orders of people could be assimilated to (and were distantly derived from) the percepts of government found in the *Laws of Manu* and other classical political texts. These 'Hindu' norms of ethical government were re-encoded in general statements about the same time as Abul Fazl propagated their Indo-Muslim equivalents in the *Ain-i-Akbari*, the 'Institutes of Akbar', of 1590. In Rajasthan, for instance,

Nainsi's sayings on good government dwell on similar themes.[46] Somewhat later, the Maratha text 'Ajnapatra' propagated a comparable set of rules about virtuous society and good kingship.[47]

In the wider and more popular discourse, these ethical traditions may have interpenetrated even more completely. As Francis Zimmermann has brilliantly shown in his *The Jungle and the Aroma of Meats*, Hindu ecological and medical ideas similarly formed part of a package with what we call geography, farming and medicine.[48] Valentine Daniel's closely argued work on contemporary Tamilnadu, *Fluid Signs*, shows how certain castes, and by extension people, are thought to thrive on and in turn modify certain types of land.[49] Brahmins should live on sweet soil and fructify it; warriors on astringent soil; merchants on sour soil, and so on. Just as the humours of the human body could be balanced by appropriate places of residence, spiritual disciplines and bio-medical remedies, so communities and kingdoms could be properly regulated by balancing and toning up, as it were, the humoural essences of their constituent communities. The soil could be improved by planting appropriate trees and crops, and by digging fructifying wells. But equally, the settlement of learned men, great saints and prosperous merchants could implant virtue in the land and people.

In their more rational, theoretical forms these agronomic-cum-medical-cum-political doctrines could be applied to all polities, from empires to petty kingdoms. They merged easily with and strengthened popular sentiments about the charisma of the land and the virtue of mutually complementary bodies of people. They may be glimpsed in the writings of early modern Indian statesmen, Sufi teachers, Hindu devotional leaders and even in popular discourse about the reigns of good kings and the elements of perfidy and oppression (*andhera*) in the rule of bad kings. They provide a key to the history of political thought in India, and they were reinterpreted by the Indian political leaders of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

It is true that the 'Hindu' scheme of social ordering was theoretically more hierarchical than the Muslim one, which tended to stress the bonding of different but equally valuable qualities in the individual body and in the body politic. In practice, though, the valuation of nobility in the Indo-Muslim scheme tended to make the whole scheme more hierarchical than it might appear. Similarly, the fluidity of society and the pervasive view that the essences of all castes had been mixed in the modern, degenerate era (Kali Yug) tended to confuse the theoretical rigidity of

Hindu hierarchy. In the popular imagination, therefore, Hindu and Muslim ideas of good government were broadly congruent and, for many rural people in south Asia, remain so today.

The Indo-Muslim and 'Hindu' traditions, however, did not entirely merge. Ultimately, the Muslim tradition was infused with the notion of an Almighty God and rejected Brahminism as an error. The 'Hindu' one was based on the pre-eminent notion of divine sacrifice on the meritorious land of India and saw Islam as a '*dharma* of confusion'. As Akbar and his 'broad-church' followers agreed, these different faiths should be in constant, fruitful dialogue. Yet the two ethical systems, each bearing on particular notions of patriotism, remained congruent and homologous. They did not become a syncretic whole, appealing to the same form of divine legitimation. This was to become significant in the nineteenth century when some of these political traditions were appropriated both by Muslim conservatives and by Hindu revivalists whose prescriptions for the future of India differed significantly from each other's and ultimately became mutually antagonistic.

All this may sound rather abstract. Let us examine one example of the humoural notion of patriotism and also of the fissures within it. An Indo-Persian nobleman of the eighteenth century, who served the failing Mughal regime, wrote a history of the new Hindu Maratha kingdoms which challenged the old Empire in western India. He wished to explain historically why the noble, pious and Muslims states had fallen prey to the plebeian tribal soldiery of the Marathas. He writes of the Marathas:

> The reason why this community has a dry and stiff [that is rebellious nature] is that the food of this community consists of pulses, oils and chillies; they put hot chillies into everything they eat. This is why their nature has become dry and hot.[50]

The chronicler reported that the rebellious Maratha leader used 'only the dry grains—bajra and jowar. He does not like wheat. He uses pulses and green vegetables. The real profession of these Brahmins is begging. When beggars become kings, the world is ruined and the substance of religious and learned men is seized from them'.

In this line of thinking, social harmony, like physical well-being, is maintained by balanced consumption and expenditure. The purpose of kingship is to balance and arbitrate the humours of the body politic, which consist of fiery warrior peoples, choleric learned men and merchants and earthy peasants. Poison in men's bodies and hearts was linked to the

poisoning of the land by strife and bad humours. It seems quite possible that those indigenous sociologies which in the nineteenth century were transformed into a sharp social theory of caste difference and nice distinctions of purity and pollution were in the pre-colonial past part of a more embracing, but also more fluid discourse of humours.

As noted, it follows from the Indian tradition of moral ecology that the commonwealth is composed of different bio-moral beings. In this sense, the ideal order of caste and community in Indian thought was an analogue of the idea of ancient constitution in Western Europe. The Europeans of the Enlightenment dimly perceived this; Ronald Inden, drawing on the anthropology of McKim Marriott, has revived this interpretation for early medieval India.[51] Nicholas Dirks's theory of pre-colonial Indian kingship as a decentralized network of mutual obligations mediated through a sacro-royal centre seems compatible with it.[52]

Oriental despotism is accordingly a myth; the segments and corporations which made up pre-colonial polities did not, of course, draw on as highly articulated notions of political representation as in the West. Yet, in theory and in practice, rulers needed to negotiate with representative interests, with qualities of people. Indians achieved what we might call 'virtual representation' in royal assemblies and through a variety of written public attestations to authority, but most particularly through informal local customary councils (*panchayats*) which were thought to embody and strengthen the virtuous balance of local knowledge, virtue and productivity.

All the same, the existence of doctrines of good government and corporate representation is not sufficient to prove the existence of rational patriotisms. Is it not true that pre-colonial Indian states and people had a very weak sense of territoriality? On the contrary, the sense of territory was strong amongst both nobles and commoners. But what they perceived was not so much a delimited economic resource with fixed boundaries as a landscape of virtuous spirits. Since lands have spirits and substances that are embodied in their people, a sacred duty of kings and good counsellors was to hoard and protect the goodness of the lands. This goodness might have been in the form of people, sweet rivers, learned men, cows, chaste women, skilled artisans and treasures. It was composed not only of our present being but of the virtue of the great men of the past who bestowed their moral riches on the land. The graves of charismatic preachers, great kings, heroes of Islam, and great scholars are also part of the common inheritance of the regional community. The

first article of many treaties designed to exchange lordship in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century India laid on the new ruler the duty of protecting graves and holy places.[53]

Far from enshrining free trade, the statesmen and chroniclers who elaborated these sentiments into theories of pious government enjoined on the ruler the duty of hoarding and protecting his resources. On the approach of a famine, kings immediately prohibited the export of their produce beyond the boundaries of their realms, as in Europe before Adam Smith, indicating that firm political boundaries were comprehensible to pre-colonial rulers and people, but that these were only formally activated in times of need or sacred action.[54]

The Historical Creation of Indian Patrias

So far the chapter has considered patriotisms and political ethics in late-pre-colonial India as an inheritance of sentiments and ideas. It now moves on to consider the historical forces which gave substance and a sense of place to them: the expansion of states, economic integration and the growth of ecumenical 'social communication'.

In European and other Asian histories the state has always been considered a critical force in the creation of the patriotisms of early modern realms and the later nationalisms of fully-fledged nation-states. Where, as in England and France, the state, the nobility and merchants were strong and capable of eroding local particularisms, patriotism or proto-nationalisms as they are sometimes opaquely called, evolved rapidly. Where, as in Germany and Italy, looser systems of states perpetuated local particularisms, regional patriotisms clustered in cultural realms defined by language and a sense of common civilization. Here, energized nationalisms awaited the unifying force of nineteenth-century capitalism and European rivalries.

This type of argument need not be confined to Europe. In re-evaluation of the Qing empire of eighteenth-century China, previously thought an unlikely place in which to encounter anything resembling a sense of nationality or patriotism, Joanna Waley-Cohen has shown how the eighteenth-century Qian Long ruler promoted a composite Manchu–Chinese identity to unify his empire, using his military victories as propaganda and instituting state ceremonies of remembrance and triumph. Ironically, Qian Long's stress on the Manchu element in this reinvented imperial patriotism widened the gap between Manchu and Chinese subjects, stimulating an aggressive and purely Chinese patriotism.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that historians of China are now discovering analogues to patriotism or so-called proto-nationalism in China before any significant western impact on that society.[55]

In India too we can discern state-sponsored patriotism before colonialism, but we can also isolate some of those internal forces which were creating homelands out of loose bundles of rights over land and temple-based polities. As Dirk Kolff argues in his *Rajput, Naukar and Sepoy* (1990), regional elites began to perceive themselves as homogeneous social unities because they were fighting as groups inside, or sometimes against, Mughal imperial armies. This bound together the inhabitants of homelands around the service of tutelary deities and local dynasties. But equally, outside the purview of the state, people expressed a common identity by using the local languages which had begun to crystallize by the seventeenth century, often in parallel with patterns of popular devotional religion. These language communities were not, of course, as exclusive and delimited as they were to become in the nineteenth century, but the pressures towards standardization generated by courts and more unified elites and clerisies had already begun to work on them.

Again, segments of regional populations searching for status adopted patterns of dress, food and housing, the similarities of which overrode differences of caste, and even religion. Such pre-colonial societies were not very literate, even by other Asian standards. Yet they demonstrated what I have elsewhere called 'literacy awareness'. They possessed increasingly sophisticated regional and even interregional systems of communication.[56] The significance of written instruments such as newsletters and private epistles was magnified by dense networks of informal oral agencies of communication serviced by passing religious teachers, astrologers, physicians, balladeers and midwives. The rapid development of regional marketing and financial systems between 1500 and 1800 also helped pull together the many temple- and fort-based peasant communities (deshs, watans or *nadus*) into wider entities.[57]

The bearers of these emerging identities and traditions of political discourse were therefore of various origins. They included the high status and literate servants of the Mughal regions and, to a greater degree, post-Mughal kingdoms. They also included literacy-aware warrior nobles who memorialized their homelands in ballads and family histories. Merchant-caste people and respectable peasants and artisans participated in communities of language and belief which increasingly underpinned them.

How does this fit with received theory? Ernest Gellner's and Benedict

Anderson's[58] stage theories of nationalism proceed by sharp ruptures. For them nationality and its energized form, nationalism, manifested themselves fully armed as a reflection of industrialization, public education and communities of print.

Yet this fails to note that there was commercialization, artisan industrialization and expansion of literacy awareness in many societies generations before full industrialization and mass print capitalism. In India these slower and less dramatic social transformations provided the context for the emergence of the patriotisms which preceded and sometimes helped root the later nationalisms.

One reaction to this argument about Indian patriotisms, expressed by Sidney Mayer, historian of southeast Asia, was this: 'How can you have patriotism without a country?'[59] India, even the Indian regions in this reading, were mere 'geographical expressions', in the sense Metternich, the Austrian statesman, applied it to the disunited Italy of the early nineteenth century. The next section proceeds therefore, to give some examples of the emergence of homelands in particular regions of pre-colonial India. The clearest case is that of the Maratha lands of western India from the later sixteenth century. Here the three principal conditions for the emergence of old patriotism seem to be in evidence. First, there were active social and ideological movements binding together people of a perceived region and coming to communicate in a common language. Second, a locally based political power instituted a conscious and sustained attempt to foster an active sense of common identity. Third, a series of conflicts with outside Others was given ideological meaning and memoralized for future generations.

The Marathas: The Paradigmatic Example of Pre-colonial Indian Patriotism

Chapter 4 returns to the issue of how, in the late nineteenth century, the first generation of western Indian nationalists appropriated and reworked the idea of the Maratha past into their demands for Indian national self-determination. This chapter simply notes that the idea of pre-colonial Maratha patriotism, even proto-nationalism, has a long and contentious history. Its most famous exponent, Justice M.G. Ranade, a nation builder, if not a nationalist, wrote in his *Rise of Maratha Power*:

> The Marathas have always formed a separate nation and still regard themselves as such. They possess plain features, short stature and a small but wiry frame . . . Born in and near the Western Ghat Mountains and their numerous tributary ranges, they all have the qualities of mountaineers.[60]

This juxtaposition of supposed racial characteristics with a particular region was echoed by many later writers. The very title of S.R. Sharma's book of 1934, *The Founding of Maratha Freedom*, gives the flavour of this patriotic literature. Sharma writes that Shivaji Bhonsla fought against the Muslims of Bijapur and the Mughal Empire 'for the liberation of his country and people'.[61]

Most contemporary historians rightly reject the nineteenth-century obsession with race essences in which this literature revels. It is also undeniable that the exaggerated hostility to Islam that such writers attributed to Shivaji, the founder of the Maratha state, and his successors was profoundly ahistorical. But naïve and politically charged as were the nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Maratha nationalist histories, the reaction against them in the interests of scientific history and Indian secularism has certainly gone too far.

The most innovative work on this topic is André Wink's *Land and Sovereignty in India. Agrarian Society and Politics Under the Eighteenth-century Maratha Swarajya*.[62] Wink argues that the Maratha kingdom was essentially an extension of Islamic state formation by other means. For Wink, the expansion of Islam from the days of the Prophet is the fundamental force in modern Eurasian economic and social history. The external impetus given by Islam galvanized warriors to create new kingdoms on the fringes of Muslim commercial and political expansion, which all to one degree or another inherited the institutions of west Asian Muslim polities. Far from being a people, Wink argues, the Marathas were irregular horsemen on the fringes of Islamdom, a kind of semi-Islamized Cossacks, as it were, though ones still clinging to a royal Hindu cult. To Wink, the idea of swarajya, 'self-rule', which the nineteenth century interpreted as Maratha 'freedom', is simply a technical Mughal revenue term meaning the home fiefdom of Shivaji and his successors. No greater ideological charge is inherent in it, and certainly not a popular one.

Despite the mutual hostility of Wink and the so-called Aligarh School of Mughal historians, it is interesting that they too see the Maratha state, indeed all post-Mughal states, essentially as continuations of Mughal forms. Even Stewart Gordon's volume on the Marathas in the *New Cambridge History of India* largely sets his narrative within the paradigm of a materially based state formation, playing down its ideological and affective components and context.[63]

These ideological components and contexts were, nevertheless, critical features of the rise of the Marathas. What was occurring was not

merely state formation, but the creation of a patria. First, then, any account of it must re-emphasize the importance of the social energy and new social integration achieved by the *bhakti* devotional saints and teachers of fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Maharashtra. Their influence encompassed a social transformation without which the emergence of Maratha swarajya or 'self-rule' would have been impossible.

Most Indian devotional movements have shown a long-term tendency to fission, creating inward-looking sects which, eschewing their initial spiritual egalitarianism, reinvented some relationship with orthodox, temple-based worship. This was true also of many of western India's devotional movements. Between the twelfth and the eighteenth centuries, nevertheless, it was their capacity for fusing and amalgamating regions and communities that was more striking. The Maharashtrian devotional saints forged a flexible, popular language, Marathi, from regional vernacular languages (*prakrits*).[64] Differences between the great competing cults of Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva were diminished and a distinct Maratha version of Lord Vishnu, Vithoba, beloved of the devotional saints, was installed at a formerly largely Shaivite centre, Pandharpur.[65] The dominant peasantry of Maharashtra was never particularly concerned with the niceties of caste rules. People from surrounding agricultural and nomadic caste groups and warriors from outside were apparently absorbed within the broad Kanbi-cum-Maratha caste category as Maratha country people. During this period, too, Maratha Brahmins were the ritual and literate specialists for a broad agricultural community, not the separated embodiments of absolute purity and authority their descendants later claimed to be.

The commercialization of agriculture and the development of the cash economy indirectly strengthened this regional complex. Many of the stories and miracles of the seventeenth-century saint Tukaram, for instance, took place in the setting of regional trade and concerned petty merchants and entrepreneurial peasants.[66] Though these tropes were symbolic ones, using the market as analogy for the soul's search for techniques of liberation, they still point to the rapid emergence of a new world of relations beyond the court and the temple. At all events, the devotional saints professed unconcern for caste in matters of faith. They further diminished social distance, thus providing a common inheritance for countrymen and the new military aristocracy which constructed the Maratha states. Local Muslims were included in this broad Maharashtra Dharma—Maharashtrian moral order—especially since the sacred places of mystical Islam overlapped with the sacred circuits of the Hindu

devotees. Even differences in gender seem to have been diminished by the emerging regional culture: the most famous seventeenth-century saints, Tukaram and Ramdas, were particularly concerned to attract women to their prayer meetings, or *kirtans*.[67]

Above all, the popular ballads on the life of Tukaram are redolent of a sense of place, of the lived landscape of Maharashtra, in distinction to earlier rather abstract devotional literature. The image of the god Vithoba is dug from sweet-scented soil. Particular villages and towns are the scenes of Tukaram's encounters with the ordinary people, and the flora and fauna of the country. He takes a dip in a particular salt lake and turns it sweet and communes with the birds, like Saint Francis.[68]

This positive commitment to homeland was fused with a powerful sense of external danger to create a veritable patriotism. Ramdas says: 'Many people have now become Mahomedans; some have fallen on the field of battle; many have lost touch with their native language, and have become proficient in foreign tongues. The bounds of Maharashtra have been constrained.'[69] Elsewhere: 'Unite the people, fill them with one spirit; wherever Marathas are unite them.'[70] The Maratha Royal Edict, 'Ajnapatra' of the early-eighteenth century, similarly portrays a picture of a land linked to a series of moral and physical strong points. Maharashtra's pinnacle fortresses: 'A country without forts is like a land protected only by flying clouds.' But these forts were centres of learning, not merely arsenals. Each should be stocked with 'priests, astrologers, scripture readers, the learned, also surgeons who are versed in mineral medicines', exorcists, wound-dressers and groups of skilled artisans.[71]

In western India local warriors reinvented a version of the traditional Hindu state to build on the resources of this regional patriotism. At first the terms swarajya and watan, homeland and fiefdom, meant little more than a revenue holding of the Bhonsla family. But Shivaji, founding war-leader of the Maratha domains, and his comperes associated themselves with the Marathi saints and by conspicuous gift giving and piety were able to transform their revenue holdings into a memorialized homeland. In doing this, they appealed to high Hindu traditions as well as to regional sentiment. They streamlined the form of the Indo-Muslim state, introducing Sanskrit terms for Persian and Arabic into its administration. They carried on a campaign at the holy places of Hinduism to assert their own status not as upstart peasant warriors, but as embodiments of ancient Warrior (Kshatriya) virtue. Shivaji introduced a classical Hindu form of coronation ritual into his investment with the symbols of Mughal office.[72]

Even if it continued many of the forms of Mughal and Islamic kingship, much of the discourse and rationale of the new power was cast in

terms of a Maharashtrian form of Hindu piety. Though Maratha rulers never sacked mosques or instituted wars of religious communities, aggressive outside Muslims, 'Turks and Moors', were cast as the enemy Other, as barbarian destroyers of temples.[73] Above all, what underpinned Maratha polity was the local representative institution, the panchayat, a body in which the virtue of the local community was energized by the charisma of government. Almost all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century observers report on the fierce loyalty of all classes of people to this institution.[74] Thus, neither dynasty nor religion but a popular institution was the centre of this patriotism.

The position taken here does not, therefore, revert to the essentializing traditions of the nineteenth century which saw the emergence of a Hindu Maharashtra in the face of a generalized Muslim invasion as the inevitable outcome of a universal war of races and religions. It sees creative regional identities as contingent and historically constructed. All the same, it argues that such sentiments, ideologies and corporate organizations were more important forces than has been recognized in a medieval historiography still dominated by an arid emphasis on surplus extraction and class conflict.

In the course of the eighteenth century the Maratha state fragmented and became more involuted. With the Bhonslas' palace mayors, the Peshwas, taking over office and government, especially in Pune, forces of orthodox Hinduism re-established themselves in many aspects of Maratha life. This fragmentation, however, does not subvert the notion of Maratha patriotism. As S.R. Sharma pointed out, the Brahmin, the Maratha warrior and the Kanbi peasant continued to fight side by side in the eighteenth century.[75] Factions in the state were generally based on personal followings rather than castes or subregions. And outside Maharashtra the Marathas were still perceived as a people. Moreover, the very fact that Maratha patriotism was not an essence but a violently contested set of doctrines and sentiments, is the ultimate testimony to its importance.[76]

This tradition survived into the nineteenth century. Official annals on right government in the Maratha domains and eulogies in praise of the royal protectors of the Maratha people were complemented by a whole range of popular ballads, sung by bards throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which memorialized the Maratha wars of defence against Muslim armies, alongside the Marathas' later defeats by the Afghans and the British. A sense of patria colours these pieces, surviving the Macaulayesque translations of Harry Acworth, their nineteenth-century collector:

The lovely homes that nestle
above the Konkan green
like the sacred lotus swimming
on the water clear and sheen
My song shall not forget you
nor you the peasants' home
Fair lowlands off the Konkan
to whose twelve harbours come
the laden keels of nations
nor all the Deccan wide
from Indapur to those old fanes
where Moslem saints abide
Piecemeal by town and hamlet
They yielded to the king;
hearken Maratha princes, his glorious state, I sing.[77]

This tradition provided a powerful and inclusive set of symbolic resources on which nineteenth-century nationalists could draw. But those who cashed these symbolic cheques were as often regional chauvinists and Hindu supremacists as they were inclusive nationalists.

A Typology of Indian Patriotisms

Maharashtra provides an example of a relatively strong and generalized Indian patriotism in which an emerging sense of commitment to regional culture coincided with the creation of a regional language and the formation of a relatively strong state. Much of India north away from the Mughal heartland was, however, split into much smaller domains, ruled in the pre-colonial period by lordly lineages which protected villages and took labour services and revenue from them. In these 'segmented' kingdoms the dominant political sentiment for both lord and subject was *swamisewa*, loyalty to the overlord, a social bond which was often legitimated through submission to the overlord's titular deity.

While intricate regional patterns of pilgrimage and prestation may have criss-crossed these mini realms, powerful teacher-based devotional movements like those of Maharashtra had not developed within broad, egalitarian peasantries. Even before British rule, the most senior lineages in these kingdoms, with the Ranas of Mewar at their head, insisted on their high-caste status and aspired to the role of *chakravartins*, universal kings, rather than kings of their local domains. In classical anthropological theory, segmented polities such as this were regarded almost as the antithesis of the modern nation-state. They were therefore thought to provide powerful barriers against the emergence of regional patriotisms.

let alone sentiments of national solidarity. In this model,[78] royal lineages and their followers were in constant conflict with each other. Cultural affinity created internecine war which supported the social structure rather than merging the segments into one. Accordingly, it required the external pressures of Islamic revival, Christian conversion, colonialism and other outside transformations to forge sentiments broader than these parochial loyalties.

Loyalty to the lord did not, however, exhaust the range of political sentiment and principle even in such restricted and fissured realms. The evidence suggests that the lordly and commoner inhabitants of quite restricted territories might well have been inspired by a fluctuating sense of loyalty to homeland, or deshbhakti, which encompassed and in some senses validated the more limited swamisewa, or loyalty to dynasty. The royal lineage histories and ballads of Rajasthan like those of Maharashtra depicted the brave acts of kings, nobles and commoners in defence of land and honour against neighbours, as well as other pre-colonial outsiders, notably the Mughal emperors and, later, the Marathas themselves. In other words, royal legitimacy was itself predicated on loyalty to and protection of homelands and bodies of subjects which were conceived as valued resources. The hero Pabuji is specifically a hero of the land of Mewar, protecting its people, its milk-white cattle and its peacocks from the plundering 'Turk'.[79]

Thus, service to a lord could broaden over time into service in defence of a particular watan or homeland which, as in the Maratha case, was transformed by sentiment and mutual bonds of loyalty into a desh or homeland. In the same way the idea of the king as guarantor of *dharma*, the right order of life and worship, might in the course of time be given greater specificity and become the protector of the dharma particular to a territorial population. Even in the small segmented kingdoms of central India the phenomenon of *bhumidae*, commitment to, and defence of one's territory, could become a sentiment broader than feudal loyalty: according to an early British officer, Lieutenant J. Franklin, bhumidae 'might not inaptly be rendered patriotism, but of a very rude kind'.[80] In the case of central India, it did indeed require the more generalized pressures of the colonial regime to forge these parochial sentiments into a wider patriotic defence in the Bundela revolt of 1838–42, and later in the Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857.[81]

In Rajasthan, however, it had been the pressure of the Mughal Empire alongside the burgeoning of complex social and cultural links between and within the Rajput territories which created a distinct sense of

energized local identity well before the appearance of the British. By the eighteenth century, poets like Bankidas Asiya[82] were writing paeans to a sense of Rajput patriotism, a 'veritable nationalism' as one historian of Rajasthan literature puts it, which were very similar to that of the Maharashtrian poets we have been discussing. At the time of James Tod in the early nineteenth century, Rajasthan was seen as a region of warring Indian feudal states. Yet early British observers were also aware of what they called the 'Rajput nation' and even saw in it, as Norbert Peabody has shown, a bulwark against Maratha aspirations.[83]

Further north in the Jat territories, J.S. Lushington, in the early nineteenth century noted that he detected a 'virtual nationalism' across the whole region.[84] This provides some degree of contrast. The pre-colonial Jats were a qaum, a people or a population; they were not really a 'caste'. Even in the early nineteenth century the category was highly inclusive, with 80 per cent of the population of some of the subdivisions in the Delhi region being classed as 'Jats'. Jats in the pre-colonial period contracted marriages with other allied peasant groups; their language was designated Jatti, as opposed to the more refined Hindi and Urdu of the towns and local gentry. Jat religious practice focused around warrior heroes, while Brahmins and learned Hindu traditions were quite marginal to their culture. Jat leaders fought against the Mughals and others perceived as intruders to protect their particular territorial space, Jatwara. Jat warrior lineages emerged in the eighteenth century. As in the case of Maharashtra, an existing sense of *landespatriotismus* (territorial patriotism) created these lineages rather than the emerging states fostering such sentiments.

To the south again, a modern scholar, Cynthia Talbot,[85] has argued that a strong sense of what she calls Telugu 'ethnicity' had emerged in the southern Deccan between 1400 and 1600. This was fortified by years of conflict over a frontier zone with the Muslim Other. Further south yet, Kate Brittlebank[86] has reinterpreted the record of the Mysore Sultans Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan, inveterate foes of the British and the Marathas. Far from being outside usurpers, she argues, as southerners themselves, they drew upon and reinforced a Karnataka regional identity. Certainly, the reports of the British conquerors of 1799 revealed the active devotion of people of all castes and stations to a sense of Mysore, represented by its institutions and its martyred generalissimo, Tipu Sultan.

Finally, the chapter turns to weaker forms of patriotism in pre-colonial India. Seeley's argument that Islamic conquest snapped the bonds of

loyalty between subject and ruler might seem to be justified in the two important cases of Bengal and Tamilnadu. Here Muslim dynasties from the outside came to rule over varied and linguistically complex local societies. Resistance to the invaders, and later to the East India Company, was fragmented and incoherent. Some important work, however, has re-emphasized the importance of long-standing regional communities in the making of modern politics. Those identities were strengthened by institutions, doctrines and growing linguistic uniformity. They can also be considered forms of patriotism.

Shulman, Rao and Subrahmanyam's significant work on court culture of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Tamilnadu chronicles in the Sanskrit and Tamil literature the existence of a 'richly articulated vision of the social and cultural landscape'[87] of the Tamil country of its time. There was awareness of an outside threat: the 'terrifying Yavanas [northerners, usually Muslims] were on the move against the Temples of Shiva and Vishnu'.[88] Equally, the 'white faced hunas', Europeans devoid of purity and their hangers-on, were getting rich.

The French scientist and traveller le Gentil observed in the 1760s a strong commitment to a Tamil way of life, fortified by a myth that stressed that Tamils had once been Buddhists and that northern Brahmins were outsiders.[89] This was more than a hundred years before regional non-Brahmin movements arose in the south. Eugene Irschick's *History as Dialogue*[90] makes the case that modern Tamil identity arose from a conflicted debate between colonial rulers and indigenous informants. Though the emergence of a settled, Tamil-speaking society of respectable peasants was not a unilinear or simple process, many of the themes and institutions of modern Tamilnadu were inherited from an earlier period. In particular the spread of the Tamil language and Tamil social norms was associated with devotional religion and the interests of those peasant and artisan castes which were spread across the whole of the region, pulling together localities where the little traditions of more parochial and rooted peasant groups were dominant.

The massive literature on pre-colonial Bengal can be interpreted in a similar way One should not underestimate the variety and lack of uniformity of pre-colonial Bengal: the differences between Shaivite, Vaishnavite and Shakta; between Hindu and Muslim; between the styles of sacred towns such as Nadia and the entrepots of the eastern rice frontier; or between popular and elite culture. Yet we see again evidence of the emergence of a pre-standard Bengali in the writings of Kasiram Das,

who translated the Sanskrit epics into Bengali, and the followers of the famous religious reformer Chaitanya, and Mukundaram, the seventeenth-century seer. This new literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries displays once again a profound sentiment of place—of Golden Bengal—and a fear of the outside other, but one paired with a sense of community which embraced local Muslims and Christians.[91]

The aim of this chapter, therefore, has not been to confront us with another set of unaltering Indian 'essences', but to show how identities and doctrines wider than the social divisions of village cluster, clan and community were forming and reforming in immediate pre-colonial India. The next chapter goes on to consider the relationship between commitment to homeland—what has been called patriotism—and commitment to religious community. It then considers the collision between Indian patriotisms and the power of the English East India Company.

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The Consolidation of Indian Patrias and the Colonial Encounter

Sir John Seeley claimed in 1882 that Indians could feel no sentiment of patriotism, though he conceded that British arrogance might finally be creating resistance among them. Recent historians have asserted that Indian nationalism was a 'derivative discourse', except possibly with regard to the realm of deep, domestic religious commitment. The first chapter argued that an analogy to European patriotisms—that sense of national community which formed long before the French Revolution and industrialization unleashed the fully armed nation-state—could be found in the sentiment of attachment to land and political institutions which developed rapidly in some regional Indian homelands between 1400 and 1800. In particular cases, most evidently in Maharashtra, a patriotism underpinned by language, devotional religion and economic integration was energized by an expanding state which promoted themes of war and remembrance. Here nineteenth-century Indian nationalist historians were exaggerating, but not wildly anachronistic, when they wrote of nationalities-in-making. The notion of traditional patriotism, then, is a useful heuristic theme which gives us a middle term between the decentralized temple-based aggregations and lordships of medieval India and modern nationalism.

Traditional patriotism was reinforced with doctrines analogous to what have been called the rational patriotisms of Europe. These ideas clustered around themes of the perfect city, corporate kingship, humoural balance and good counsel. Though universal in their scope and derived from Greek and Muslim sources as much as from Indian ones, these doctrines found particular applications in the institutions and traditions of the Indian homelands. Traditional patriotism and its political discourses, therefore, drew on but can be distinguished from the rational universalizing ideas of the cosmopolitan elites who served the Mughal

Empire. They were, or came to be rooted more closely in particular landscapes, institutions and traditions of virtue than the latter. Again, traditional patriotisms could draw on both Islamic and Brahminical Hindu normative ideas, but they were more eclectic, popular and particularistic than those embracing ideas of faith, *dharma* and *iman*. Moreover, like classical republicanism in Europe, analogous patriotic ideas of government and society could be employed in the Indian case to address the injustices which resulted from the widening scale of government and the expanding cash economy. They were used to tame commerce with virtue.

Finally, these activated regional solidarities and political traditions were given particular form by networks of social communication within the broader Indian ecumene, or cultural area. India was not a highly literate society. But it was literacy aware. Politics was enlivened by well-tested routines of political criticism and its communication through newsletters and private letters, and the networks of oral information created by runners, itinerant doctors, astrologers, merchants and officials.

The next two chapters go on to consider the engagement between Indian patriotisms and British rule in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to give a deeper ideological genealogy to later Indian nationalism. But before doing so, this chapter considers two further points. First, did any sentiments or doctrines exist in pre-colonial India which expressed a wider sense of attachment or gave evidence of an imagined community beyond that of the patria or region envisioned as a charismatic landscape? Were there, in fact, any associations and networks which covered the broader area of what became known as India?

Patrias and the Ecumene of India

While Seeley and later historians occasionally conceded the existence of a kind of local chauvinism in pre-colonial India, they were quite convinced that no active and popular identity broader than the region existed. I think that broader loyalties and imagined communities had indeed emerged and that these were also to play a subtle role in the construction of later Indian nationalism. Loyalty to homelands was strong, but despite internecine warfare between them, people could and did imagine yet wider communities.

Regional patriotisms flourished typically on the fringes of larger imperial systems. Here, local autonomy reasserted itself and ruling military groups, linked by clan and patronage to the magnates who controlled the villages, could raise opposition to imperial pretensions. In

Europe strong proto-national identities emerged, after all, not in the German or Italian states but in Holland, England and Iberia. In India, lands distant from the centre—Maharashtra, Telengana, even, in a different way, Bengal and Gujarat—provide parallels. At the centre of the Indian empire, closer to Delhi and Agra, the royal government was stronger. Here the continuity of local warrior landholding groups was ruptured by imperial confiscation and grants, and the normative power of the imperial culture more strongly felt. Only in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did Awadh or the Punjab see the emergence of a stronger commitment to local autonomy and regional identity, as we shall see.

This, however, does not mean that patriotic doctrines and sentiments of belonging played no part in politics in the imperial heartlands. During late Mughal and Company rule, for instance, the word 'Hindustan' underwent an interesting transformation. Beginning as a geographical description used by Muslim invaders to designate the conquered territory across the river Indus, Hindustan came to mean first an imperial territory inhabited by Indians, mostly Hindus. Later, it began to signify 'our cultural realm of Hindustan' common to Hindus and Muslims as the literati and administrators of the northern Indian empire came to identify increasingly with their abode.

It was this sense of identity beyond the local patria which the Emperor Akbar and his minister Abul Fazl had attempted to put to use. Akbar's policies are often seen as cross-communal, an attempt to bind Hindus and Muslims together. They certainly earned him the hostility of the orthodox Muslim divines who objected both to his pretensions to learning and to his theological debates with Hindu and Christian learned men. Yet the emphasis on 'communal harmony' is anachronistic since communities had not yet solidified, and Akbar cannot really be described as a 'secular' ruler. What Akbar was perhaps trying to do was build a specifically Indian imperial patriotism in the context of the broader sovereignty of Islam. His royal religion, the Din-al Illahi, was an Indian, that is Hindustani, royal cult and mode of devotion.[1] He adopted Indian dress, food and manners and tried to bring his international nobility closer to the sentiments of his Indian subjects. He sought authority to give legitimacy to a specifically Indian empire. The *Ain-i-Akbari*, the 'Institutes of Akbar', depicted that empire with a strong sense of place, as an interlinked set of regional communities, each boasting its special history and traditions, its own bio-moral substance, territorial aristocracy, holy men, schedule of fine products and marvels.[2]

Akbar's tradition was, as we know, bitterly opposed by orthodox Muslims during his reign and driven underground by his successors, especially the Emperor Aurangzeb, who attempted to rebuild the imperial structure on the basis of a revived Sunni piety. Nevertheless, the tradition remained strong among soldiers, literati and administrators throughout north and central India. In the course of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for instance, innovative attempts by Muslim literati to translate and understand Hindu texts gave way to systematic treatises on the manners, customs and arts of Hindustan. These give a sympathetic account of Hindustani traditions in music, art and poetry which blended elite and popular, Indian and foreign, Hindu and Muslim forms. A good example of this genre was the 'Tuhfat-al Hind', a kind of encyclopaedia of Indian lore, written about 1690.[3] Comparable works of Indian cultural anthropology proliferated as Mughal grandees patronized Hindu artisans, musicians and dancers, seeking to broaden their own bases of support in the community.

What was happening was that 'Hindustan' which had once been a mere geographical expression, was being endowed with emotional meaning. While many Muslim writers and literati continued to denounce India as hot, dirty, and full of black idolaters—one Persian sufi even declared that it was a 'dunghill'—poetic paeans in praise of Hindustan proliferated. The poet Mir Afsos, for instance, waxes lyrical about India's climate, grains, sweets, beautiful women, rivers, even its modes of conveyance.[4] This lyrical glorification of the delights of the land transcended formal religious boundaries. In the eighteenth century the theme was more often represented in a melancholy tone: *ashob sheher*, elegies to the fading beauty of Hindustan, the decay of its cities and the pollution of its land. Both complementary traditions passed on into the nineteenth century. In the 1830s the poet Ghalib was able to delight in the sight of the Holi festival lights at the Hindu sacred city of Benares and declare that 'Benares was the Mecca of India'.[5] This was not a 'secular' pronouncement; Ghalib was presumably well aware that his couplet was splendidly unorthodox. He was also aware that there were strict boundaries to religious syncretism. Yet his cry was also a challenge: religious differences should stand in abeyance in the presence of a subtle sense of Hindustani patriotism.

Political change maintained this ideological broadening. The physical movement of elites under Mughal rule gave broader meaning to the notion of Hindustan. But autonomous social changes and changes in the culture of communication were equally important. In the eighteenth century many nobles wished to retain Persian as the language of all

polite society, as Muzaffar Alam has shown.[6] Still, Hindustani was becoming the 'language of Hindostan'. A higher and higher percentage of the later Mughal nobility and the nobility and clerical classes of the Mughal successor states were Indian-born. Hindustani/Urdu was the natural language of government and social intercourse because the careful incorporation into the body politic of vernacular speakers among traders, artisans and military men was the essence of statecraft.[7]

Hindustani became a community of sensibility as reflected in the proliferation of poetic biography, *tazkirahs*. Its use broadened out from the imperial army and camp to the courts of regional rulers. Popular and elite forms enriched each other, diffused among ordinary people by the sayings of sufi masters and Hindu sectarian leaders. The language was honed and perfected at the Delhi flower market and the death celebrations of Shah Madar Sharif, the patron saint of rural Awadh, as much as in the elite poetry readings. Early-nineteenth-century European observers such as Gilchrist and Garcin de Tassy went a little far when they called this the 'national language' of India. What they were seeing, however, was the development of an ecumenical speech which also expressed a latent sense of Hindustani identity. For Hindustan—the north Indian ecumene, or cultural homeland—was a domain of communication as much as the heart of an imperial system. Persian newsletters informed its clerical and administrative elites.

The private Hindustani letter linked its literati, and letter-writing manuals, *inshas*, were used to disseminate political programmes and moral advice. Theological and political debates raged within the boundaries of the north Indian ecumene. These intensified in the eighteenth century as Shias and Hindus came to power within the boundaries of Hindustan and when, as one chronicler put it, 'the Empire became like one great bazaar' where everything worthwhile was for sale.[8]

The decline or 'decentralization' of the Mughal Empire in the eighteenth century had complex repercussions on the development of regional patriotisms. While the imperial centre retained some charisma and authority down at least to the 1830s, the imagined community of the broader Mughal Empire also retained some integrity. Mughal nobles and literati scattered to the regional centres of post-Mughal realms retained connections with each other, continued to marry into each other's families and venerate the symbols of their former imperial rank. The noble Mahommed Aztari, travelling from Delhi through Awadh, Rajasthan and central India to Madras in the 1790s still conceived the whole

of India as the empire of Hindustan, paying little attention to those supremacies and authorities, including the British, who were tearing it apart.[9]

The idea that the former Mughal Empire was equivalent to all-India, *sara Hindustan*, continued to recur even in the writings of the first generation of Indian servants of the British colonial power. Yet this usage overlapped with a more restrictive geographical usage of the term, equivalent to the heartland of Hindustani-speaking north India from the boundaries of the Punjab to Bengal. This idea of Hindustan, as I have suggested, had began to acquire a sentimental force of its own. It coexisted with other conceptions of patria, either overlapping with them, distinguishing itself from them or including them.

So, for instance, the idea of Awadh was fully incorporated into this narrower Hindustan. But Awadh itself as a concept had acquired added symbolic meaning and even a degree of popular legitimation in the eighteenth century.[10] At the base was the notion of Awadh as the favoured realm of Ajodhya, birthplace of Ram and of other Hindu and Muslim warrior heroes, whose exploits were celebrated in a certain local form of the Hindustani lingua franca, Awadhi. Onto this base was grafted an identity created by the patronage of the newly emergent ruling dynasty of the royal house of Awadh as it gradually separated itself from the imperial centre in Delhi after 1730. Relations of service, marriage and ritual patronage within the ruling elite reinforced these ideas over several generations. British pressure on the kingdom after 1765 gave its own citizens and other Indians a sense of the uniqueness of Awadh, expressed by many Indian poets and commentators in the early nineteenth century. In 1857, despite internecine war and faction, many of the actors against British invasion were animated by a sense of the distinctiveness and virtue of the territory of Awadh that went beyond simple loyalty to the regime which the foreigners had so summarily ejected.

The idea of Punjab, on the other hand, defined itself against the more geographically restricted Hindustan, but broadly within the ambit of the wider notion of Hindustan as the global territory of the Mughal Empire and its constituent *qaums* or peoples. In the *Ain-i-Akbari* and other earlier topological and panegyric works what later becomes the Punjab is split into the provinces of Lahore and Multan, though the similarities between them and the special excellence of their products and people are noted. However, by the time Waris Shah composed his poem 'Hir-Waris' in 1766, Punjab had already assumed a particular identity of its

own.[11] Its wonderful waters and products had given it the epithet 'the beautiful forehead of Hindustan'. As in the case of Awadh, the experience of rule under the multi-ethnic kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and intense British pressure on its boundaries consolidated the identity of the Punjab. In works such as the 'Char-Bagh-i Punjab' of Ganesh Das (1849) and Shah Muhmmad's 'Jangnamah Shah Muhammad', Punjab had become a homeland separate from Hindustan, albeit inhabited by different 'communities' (qaums), Hindu, Muslim and Sikh. Indeed, for all the factionalism between court, landed aristocracy and army that tore the kingdom apart, there was present a very clear sense of Punjabi patriotism during the British occupation of 1849–52, which to some degree transcended subregion and community.

So in the mid-eighteenth century, before the onset of full colonial rule, we could conceive India as a fading imperial polity on the periphery of which regional patrias were emerging. These patrias were defined by political culture, particular religious practice and language. Nearer the centre of the old imperial polity, a rather different sort of patriotic identity had been generated by the cultural strategies of the ruling groups, the idea of a Hindustani heartland. This idea coexisted still with a much wider sense of 'Hindustan' as the global realm of the Mughal Empire and overlapped with the wider global community of 'Hindu' religious practice. Even in the eighteenth century this 'all-India' had a shadowy existence, carrying more symbolic resonance than the idea of a set of home provinces of the former Empire. But how did this idea of Hindustan relate to the concept of regional homeland and to the broader terrain of the subcontinent?

There is no doubt that pre-colonial Indians had problems when they tried to represent the idea of an India beyond the regional patria characterized by its own institutions, history and language. One eighteenth-century statesman wished to convey the sense that all Indians should ally against all Europeans. He had to employ a cultural, indeed sartorial, description, explaining the plan as an 'alliance of all turban-wearers against all hat-wearers'.[12] But the absence of a consistently used and common word for the wider nationality should not be taken to mean that only local patriotisms existed. For the patrias were linked by a variety of institutions and sentiments. As we have seen, Hindustan was a flexible and imprecise term, something between a homeland writ large and an imperial patria. Padshah-i Hind (the Empire of India) or the 'Empire of the Seven Climes' (*haft aklim*) conveyed something of the

broader Empire, including the patrias, over which the imperial dynasty claimed legitimate authority. One early-nineteenth-century petition refers to the customs of 'The Empire of the Seven Climes, or rather, Hindustan',[13] revealing a pervasive ambiguity. The fact that the culture and political forms of north India were expanding to Hyderabad and the south in the course of the eighteenth century meant that it was now possible to identify the cultural term Hindustan with the greater part of the subcontinent. Hindustani began to act as a subcontinental link language, crossing regional and religious boundaries.

Worship within what India's rulers perceived as a Hindu tradition had also long evisioned a wider community, imagined for most but a community of practice for the few holy men, scholars and pilgrims who peregrinated across the breadth of the land. Regional deities continued being incorporated into these wider networks of charismatic power. Local goddesses symbolically married the high gods of the wider Hindu pantheon. The migration of artisans and merchant people across the subcontinent, especially in the seventeenth century, but even in the eighteenth, created further homologies and links between aspects of ritual and charismatic conceptions of land. Thus the formerly Tamil and Telugu shrine of Tirupati became an object of special veneration for Gujarati merchant caste people whose networks of trade and moneylending stretched to the southern tip of the Peninsula even in the late eighteenth century. And this sacred landscape was not an exclusive Hindu one for it was still populated with Muslim shrines and saints, even if such syncretic links remained ambiguous and contested.[14]

The interminable conflicts between the rulers of the regional patrias did not necessarily eliminate or exclude a fickle sense of wider identity. The Maratha invaders of north India were always said to feel a special affinity to the Jats, warrior husbandmen with a weak sense of caste like themselves. After the Marathas' terrible defeat at Panipat in 1761, Jat villagers helped the Marathas to evade their Muslim enemies and hid them in their villages. But a sense of the common realm of India, sometimes 'Hindustan', sometimes simply 'the Empire', was felt amongst Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike. A Maratha document of the 1750s, for instance, stated that the Persian and Afghan invasions of India were illegitimate because kings of Iran and Turan 'have never held dominion within Hindustan'.[15] The Marathas saw themselves, therefore, not as usurpers of Mughal rule but as protectors of the boundaries of Hindustan, a Persian term which had acquired meaning even for them.

Hindustan was a value-laden word which afforded an ideological symbol and a historical memory to later nationalists. Contentious and undefined as it was, it also gave evidence of some actual continuities, notably in the areas of family abode, landholding and language, which linked the earlier inchoate patriotisms to the later and wider nationalism.

Religious Community and Patriotism

Second, this chapter must address a key question: the contentious and difficult topic of religious community in the immediate pre-colonial period. In a sense, this issue provides a rationale for this book as a whole. In 1985, I published an essay (reproduced as Chapter 7 here), in which I tried to raise some questions about the 'pre-history' of communalism, that is Hindu–Muslim conflict.[16] This was decidedly unpopular in some Indian circles because it had questioned the facile assumption that intercommunal violence, specifically violence and contention between Hindus and Muslims, was a product of the colonial period alone, that 'communalism' was constructed by the British and Indian politicians of the later colonial years. (In fact, the essay distanced itself from the view that a coherent communalism existed before 1800, though several prejudiced commentators overlooked that fact.) One fear among Indian historians was that simply to question the piety that religious boundaries had always been fluid and accommodating in the pre-colonial period was to give ammunition to the Hindu right which was palpably on the upsurge even in the late 1980s.

My reaction to this political argument is that it is precisely the fact that the Hindu right can appear to score points by claiming that open historical debate has been suppressed by a secularist, leftist establishment that has given them strength. If these were matters of reasoned historical debate, devoid of significance for the rights of the citizens of the Republic of India since 1947, the perversion of history would be more difficult.

However, one of the weaknesses of the presentation in 1985 was that it did not put forward the idea that the sense of religious community might have salience, even the potential to create division before British rule, into the context of other identities and ideologies which might have been in contention with it. It should, in fact, have considered the pre-history of nationalism, caste and class, alongside the pre-history of communalism. The present work argues that it was often the binding force of unevenly developing and differently expressed regional patriotisms

and the political discourse of good government rather than the policies of supposedly secular pre-colonial rulers that provided the main resistance to those forces in pre-colonial India which stressed the exclusive bonds of religious community.

This was as true of Islam and the Sikh Khalsa as it was of an inchoate notion of Hindu-ness. Regional patriotism, the post-Mughal idea of Hindustan, religious community, attachment to brotherhood, war-band or merchant corporation—all these were in constant contention with each other during the transition to colonialism.

In eighteenth-century India we can discern no tendency towards the triumph of any one of these forces. Their mutual balance was indeed to be fundamentally altered by the pressures of the rule of the East India Company. Nonetheless, in order properly to understand the consequences of colonial rule, it is important to suggest some ways in which religious community was significant to pre-colonial Indians. Romila Thapar has argued that sectarian identities were pre-eminent until the colonial period.[17] Hindus had little sense of themselves as Hindus and Muslims were viewed as simply the followers of one of the many paths of Indian religion among Shaivites, Vaishnavites, Shaktas, and so on.

The Hindu–Muslim distinction, in other words, had no superordinate importance in comparison with other lines of ritual division or cultic practice. Broadly, this continued to hold true into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But there is also some evidence that social and ideological forces were working to invest that particular distinction between the Islamic and the 'Hindu' with greater significance—in some places and at some times—even before the British conquest.

The specific Hindu model of kingship, for instance, was attaining greater prominence throughout the subcontinent. Perhaps, as Ronald Inden seems to suggest, Vijayanagara was the first of the 'reinvented' Hindu kingdoms.[18] But, by the eighteenth century several new monarchies throughout the subcontinent were stressing their legitimacy as Hindu states, even if these themes had not yet become wholly exclusive of other forms of religious patronage. In addition to the Maratha Hindu or 'Brahmin state', which has already been discussed, rulers from Nepal in the north to Travancore[19] in the south seem in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to have put greater emphasis on specifically Hindu rites in their coronation ceremonies and to have emphasized their role as arbiters between castes and upholders of Hindu righteousness. The most extreme case was perhaps Nepal, where it was a matter of pride to retain a system of justice based on caste. In the early

nineteenth century a judge of the Kathmandu court told Brian Hodgson, the British Resident, with disdain, that in the plains 'The customs are Muhammadan and all distinctions of caste are obliterated'.[20]

Many of the new rulers, however, still used Mughal symbols and forms of government; they retained Muslim servants and gave offerings at local Muslim shrines. This was true, for instance, of Raja Sawai Jai Singh of Jaipur in the first four decades of the eighteenth century.[21] But while Jai Singh generally seems to have conceived of himself as a loyal liegeman of a Muslim emperor, the very existence of that all-India Empire allowed the Raja to bring together a vast range of Sanskrit religious texts in Jaipur and to make his court the centre of religious debate which transcended the various rites of Hinduism. Jai Singh went beyond a fetishistic collection and hoarding of texts as symbols of religious power. He intervened in the disputes between various Vaishnavite sectaries in his kingdom and attempted to prescribe what was appropriate Vaishnavite behaviour, if not yet a 'Hindu' rite.

This process of centralization and adjustment also took place at other great centres of Hindu pilgrimage and learning during the period 1500–1850. Scholars and teachers congregated at centres such as Benares, and Nadia in Bengal, patronized by local rulers and indirectly protected by the Mughal peace. Propinquity did not imply fusion, of course. But it did mean that issues of religious and ritual boundaries and, even more, issues of religious commonalities were being argued out and generalized upon before British officials began to seek texts and pandits to advise them on 'real' Brahminical Hinduism.

The tendencies towards adjustment and interrelationship within the branches of Hinduism were strengthened by the expansion of an all-India pilgrimage made possible by Muslim rule. Again, Sheldon Pollock has observed that the cult of the warrior god Ram gave medieval Hinduism a set of symbols of power and spiritual domination which marked it off from other cults, and particularly from the Islamic Other.[22] Evidently, Ram's story became an even more powerful tradition once Tulsi Das had translated it into the Hindustani vernacular in the sixteenth century. The spread of the vernacular version of the *Ramayana*, the *Ramcharitmanas*, gave kings and ordinary householders a model of moral life in this world which helped mediate between rite and practice.

There is no suggestion here of the existence of communalism, that is the transformation of religious ties into active and mutually hostile pseudo-ethnicity. Royal devotees of Ram had Muslim generals, even *mullahs*, at their courts. Most religious practice remained syncretic.

Nevertheless, some harder formations were emerging under the surface of this tactile practice.

It is worth remembering, in the first instance, that traditional religious syncretism was not isometric, that the participants from different religious traditions never appear to have assumed the same things about their common religious practices and beliefs. Peter van der Veer has reiterated the observation that while Hindus might well worship at Muslim saints' shrines, the guardians of the shrines did not allow them too close to the central enclosures.[23] The learned made a clear distinction between Hindu worship of the saint and the Muslim's prayer which was merely blessed by the saint's charisma. Even in the most 'syncretic' and latitudinarian context, a large part of the Hindu and Muslim religious establishments stood aloof from each other. As the figures compiled by Garcin de Tassy in the nineteenth century show, initiation into Persian literary culture caused a significant number of Hindus of the writer and administrative castes to convert to Islam.[24] This virtually never happened in reverse, even though liberal Muslim divines accepted that Ram and other benign Hindu divinities may have been precursors of the Prophet.

Hindus took part in Indo-Muslim poetry readings and even debated with Muslim mullahs. But the Muslim learned hardly ever participated in the formal religious debates of the pandits. In the mid-eighteenth century the learned Muslim Khairuddin Khan Illahabadi took the pandits to task. The learned Muslims had tried to understand Hindu beliefs and scriptures, he said. He himself accepted the historicity of the epic figures, the Pandavas. But he demanded 'what do you [pandits] know about Muslim religion?'[25] The implication was nothing. And it was notable, he thought, that one of the great Hindu donors to Benares, a Bengali, 'could not bear even the shadow of a Mussulman to fall on him'. The notion of Hindustan as a common home of Hindus and Muslims might well be emerging, but, as Jawaharlal Nehru himself recognized, this was only an uneven and partial fusion between Hinduism and Islam in India.

Of course, in neither elite nor popular discourse was the alien Other yet generally denominated simply a 'Mussulman'. Abuse in ballads and local stories was generally reserved for 'Turks', real outsiders. Our own local Muslims, our own saints and teachers were part of our cultural universe. But it was nevertheless important that the outside looter and destroyer was a Muslim. In the Pabuji tale of Rajasthan the eponymous hero takes revenge on Mir Alam, the Muslim who slaughters the

milk-white cows of peaceful Rajasthan.[26] In the ballads of eighteenth-century Telengana it is 'Toorks' again who destroy the temples and loot the cities.[27]

In the eighteenth century religious polemic became more frenetic as Hindu and Shia Muslim dynasties came to power across much of the country. Shah Waliullah, the great Delhi teacher invited the rigid Persian conqueror Nadir Shah to invade India and save it from unbelievers. His use of the *akhlaq* (ethical) tradition was much more exclusive and Islamic than that of the broader Mughal theory of government. The city was, indeed, an interdependent body politic. Its proper regulation had been upset by luxury and improvidence and could only be restored by modest and religious behaviour. But, to Shah Waliullah, Hindu polytheists and Shia heretics had also introduced poison into the body politic. Their public rituals should be suppressed and they should be expelled.[28]

Eighteenth-century India saw something of a *kulturkampf*, a flurry of controversy over public doctrine and right government, well before the Christian missionaries and their religious polemic burst on the scene. Tipu Sultan collected a large number of anti-Hindu and anti-Christian tracts at the library in his capital, but these were balanced by an equally large number of collections of Sufi sayings and biographies which showed Muslims working within the syncretic world of south Indian religion.

The discourse of religious difference existed, then, but it did not congeal into antithetical and stable 'communal' identities; rather, it shifted, fragmented and reflected back on itself. A good example is the tone of the Lucknow historian Bahadur Singh's 'Memoirs of Bahadur'. This was written in the first few years of the nineteenth century, but drew on other much earlier chronicles and on the author's own observations. Bahadur Singh writes about the continuous Muslim assaults on the Hindus of Kashmir since the twelfth century. He recounts the destruction of temples, the abduction of Hindu women and the bestiality of the conquerors.[29]

There was here an acute sense of religious antagonism. But it is revealing that Bahadur Singh did not use these incidents as a pretext for attacking Muslims or Islam in general. Instead, his target was the Kashmiri Hindu rivals of his clerical caste, the Kayasthas. The Kashmiri Brahmins, he averred, had been corrupted and polluted by violent conversion to Islam and tactical reconversions to Hinduism. Their bad humours—this theme emerges again—explain why they were such a

deplorable and deceitful bunch of people who had 'stirred up trouble all across the empire'. Ultimately, this was a local factional discourse, not a 'communal' one.

Much the same can be said about several accounts of Hindu–Muslim riots that have been preserved from immediate pre-colonial India. In form the riots seem exactly like those of the early colonial period. They often resulted from disturbances in the order of festivals and religious ceremonies brought about by dynastic or other political changes. Commercial and artisan groups seeking a more secure religious status and military groups inured to violence were key actors. The abduction of women and the destruction of shops attended these disturbances.

A Hindu–Muslim riot at the town of Jaunpur in north India in 1773, in which 4000 are said to have taken part, has some familiar features. A Hindu merchant instigated it by building a temple near an ancient mosque. Students of a local Muslim religious institution sought the support of townspeople and villagers to demolish it: 'In the twinkling of an eye', says the chronicler, 'the temple was so utterly destroyed that its site was unrecognizable, the very stones being carried away.'[30] Change the word temple to mosque, and this might be Ajodhya in 1992. The local authorities dithered about whether to allow the rebuilding of the temple, and where. This incident took place in an Indian state which was still effectively independent. There were no more than three senior Europeans within a hundred miles of the place, and of these the only one with any degree of authority, the British Resident at Benares, refused to intervene.

If 'communalism' was 'constructed' during the colonial period, as Gyanendra Pandey[31] and most Indian academic opinion have it, then it was certainly constructed in part from materials already at hand: from memories, antagonisms and aspirations which already existed, albeit set amongst competing and antithetical sentiments. Yet, antagonisms had not yet gelled into communities. It is notable, again, that the Muslim chronicler of this riot selected for particular abuse, not Hindus in general, but 'barbarous' Pathan Muslims in particular. What we have, to reiterate, are some 'preconditions' for communalism, not a foundational pre-history of it.

Patriotisms and Anti-colonial Resistance, c. 1750–1830

The second part of this chapter attempts to trace the fate of traditional Indian patriotisms through the early period of British rule. It argues that

the invasion of India by the East India Company between about 1760 and 1860 intensified traditional patriotisms, while forcing indigenous exponents of virtuous government to express themselves through novel means of communication and new idioms. At the same time British policy and movements of revival and reform opened up a wider contest over the meanings of these patriotisms, between 'Hindu' and 'Muslim', high and low caste, resister and collaborator.

The government of the East India Company had a radical but complex effect on the homelands we have been considering, as David Washbrook, David Ludden and Eugene Irschick have fully demonstrated for south India.[32] The military suppression of the former elites over much of the subcontinent aborted the upward mobility of warriors and entrepreneurs into the elites of the regional homelands. The inhabitants of patrias became more involute in their social practices. The north Indian Jats, for example, ceased to be an expansive patriotic community and became more caste-like in their life-style. The exclusive racial policy of the British government snapped, or at best drove underground, the tradition of Indian statesmanship which had nurtured its doctrines of right government.

On the other hand, British government partly adjusted its procedures, to regional languages and forms of government, resting as it had to do on subordinate Indian servants and capitalists. Bengali and Marathi, for instance, which had first taken shape in the pre-colonial patrias were purged, homogenized and systematized by missionaries and orientalists and their indigenous informants. Despite the archaic tendencies of the Company's courts and early administrators, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit declined in importance, leaving these regional vernaculars in command, and the main repository of patriotic sentiment and doctrine. The concern of the Company's officials for rural stability and secure land revenue led them to favour substantial landholding and peasant groups of relatively high caste over nomads, so-called plunderers and the free corporations of warriors and traders which had been such a feature of pre-colonial society. While the Company held the whip hand in the last resort, rural elites—whether Vellalas in Tamilnadu or Rajputs in north India—had some voice in the domestication of these societies.

As Eugene Irschick shows for Tamilnadu, the social order of the late nineteenth century was created by an uneven dialogue between powerful local leaders and colonial administrators who favoured the protection of what they took to be archetypical features of local society

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Sir Thomas Munro and Mountstuart Elphinstone who favoured a Europeanized version of the *panchayat*—the local body of arbitration—in their respective regions, are ambiguous figures even today. They are part colonial exploiter, part regional patriot. Munro still sits astride his horse on the approaches to central Chennai (Madras).

The British, in fact, were ambivalent about Indian political loyalties. On the one hand, some writers prefigured Metternich in arguing that India was no more than a 'geographical expression', incapable of patriotism or coherent resistance. Sir Thomas Munro wrote in 1824 that in comparison with the Burmese, Indians did not care very much who ruled them.[33] George Thomas—the model for Kipling's *Man Who Would be King*—who founded his own little state near Delhi, argued that Indians hated all governments with equal fervour. This position would be approved by contemporary subaltern historians.[34]

A much larger number of observers, however, thought otherwise. As Norbert Peabody has shown,[35] James Tod not only identified a strong 'nationalism' among the states of Rajasthan, but thought it could be deployed by the British against 'de-nationalising' states of plunder like the Maratha and the Sikh kingdoms. J.S. Lushington, a political officer working among the Jat peasant warriors of Bharatpur whose resistance stopped the British armies dead between 1805 and 1826, wrote of their 'deep' nationalism.[36] Significantly, the last stand of this small state stirred a wider admiration. According to one British officer, by the 1820s Bharatpur had become 'the very Palladium of native pride and independence',[37] its virtue appealed not only to its own subjects but to Indians thousands of miles away, an indication of how old patriotisms could mutually energize each other.

The ideologies and public debates imported into India by its conquerors also had an ambivalent impact on the Indian tradition of political ethics. British national assertiveness, especially in its vigorous, evangelical Christian form, forced those Indians who retained a tenuous hold on office and power to define and articulate their doctrines more clearly. At the same time the introduction into India of a limited sphere of public debate through the press and public meetings, stimulated the realm of political debate and social communication which I have called India's ecumene.

This chapter now goes on first to consider the series of patriotic revolts and wars of resistance which accompanied the Company's rise to power between 1760 and 1850, and second, it begins an examination of

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the way in which rational Indian patriotism engaged with the realm of public debate created, often unintentionally, by the colonial rulers. These struggles and contentions cannot straightforwardly be regarded as forms of proto-nationalism. Even the term 'freedom struggle' is anachronistic. But they did provide an inheritance of sentiments, legends and doctrines which were drawn upon by later nationalist leaders and supporters.

Historians have had difficulty in characterizing Indian resistance to the British during the period of the East India Company expansion from 1760 to 1820. K.K. Datta wrote of 'anti-British plots'.[38] The social historians of the 1960s and 1970s tried to make a distinction between 'primary resistance' to colonial intervention and 'secondary resistance', which occurred once colonial rule and its logic of distorted capitalism had taken root. Historians of the 1980s have often seen in these movements 'subaltern resistance', a response of the rural community to the intrusive outsider and the vigorous new logic of British revenue taking.

All these characterizations seem to be somewhat partial and behaviourist. They belie the desperate sophistication of the last generation of Indian statesmanship and underplay the attachment of populations to their local homelands. It is better to see them as patriotic revolts supported by substantial sections of the population in the face of the imminent loss of independence. 'Haji Mustapha', the Franco-Indian translator of Ghulam Hussain's 'History of the Moderns', wrote of how the revolt of Raja Cheyt Singh of Benares in 1781 galvanized Indian opinion in the whole of north India. He detected a 'subterraneous vein of national resentment' and described India under British rule as 'motionless but neither insensible or dead'.[39] Another Frenchman, the orientalist Anquetil Duperron, wrote of a national spirit of resistance to British unsurpations.[40] Both, of course, had axes to grind, but then so did many of those contemporary and colonial observers who agreed with Seeley that Muslim rule had 'severed the bonds of patriotism' in India.

In the case of the post-Mughal state of Awadh, for instance, a clear line of doctrine and policy links the resistance of its last great independent ruler, Shuja-ud Daulah, in the 1760s to the resistance of Cheyt Singh of Benares in 1781 and the revolt of Shuja's grandson Vazir Ali in 1799.[41] In each case a resolute stand by the ruler was supported by an alliance of subjects across the lines of class, caste and religion. Similar families, bureaucratic interests and popular participants were involved each time. In 1781 when detachments of British troops were cut off in

the countryside, the red-coated troops were hunted down and killed by villagers, something which the chronicler noted was rather unusual. In 1799 the rebel Vazir Ali sought allies across the subcontinent. He was supported by hosts of people described as 'myrmidons who rage for independence from the English'.[42] Like the fugitive Cheyt Singh before him, he was protected and succoured by magnates and villagers across the whole of north India, to British fury. A generation later British personnel who strayed into the red-light quarter of Lucknow were still regaled with songs in praise of Vazir Ali's bravery from the top of the courtesans' houses.[43]

It was suggested earlier that despite its hybrid, inchoate and shifting form, a more defined idea of Awadh was beginning to come into being. It was succoured not only by the ruling dynasty but by Sufis, poets and administrators who were rooting themselves locally. This embryonic patria was a cultural as well as a political construct. A regional variety of Shi'ism, always somewhat more friendly to Hindu practice, was fostered by the regime and its associated nobles and learned men. The Awadh synthesis, first brought to academic attention by Richard Barnett, may have had particular patriotic overtones. For instance, Jhau Lal, a 'Hindu' of the Kayasth writer-caste family was regarded as an intransigent enemy of the British in the 1780s and 1790s, until he was exiled by them shortly before Vazir Ali's revolt. A man of 'humble' origins, very much an Awadhi rather than a cosmopolitan Mughal civil servant, Jhau Lal mixed Hindu and Muslim practices in a relaxed manner. According to one chronicle: 'He was following the faith neither of the Muslims nor of the *kafirs* [unbelievers], but used to observe Nemaz [Muslim prayers] and at the same time follow the customs of the unbelievers.'[44]

The large Awadh court through to the 1850s acted as a crucible in which inferior groups achieved influence through cultural performance. Hindu agricultural specialists became dancing girls and courtesans. Eunuchs from rural Rajput backgrounds became royal counsellors. Such social mobility was accompanied by a perceptible loosening of religious, caste and even sexual boundaries. On the other hand a distinct Awadhi style, and commitment to the 'feel' of Awadh, emerged, which affected people great distances away from the court. It was this pride in culture and place which Abdul Halim Sharar depicted in elegiac mood after the disaster of 1857.[45] All these things were deeply suspect to the British who saw in them both sedition and debauchery. They were also suspect to the learned and cosmopolitan Muslim court servants from

outside the region who often took service with the British. They objected to the rise of low persons and to what they saw as the dissolution of caste and religion.

From our perspective, however, social mobility, cultural mixing and the forging of hybrid identities could be interpreted as the creation of a new patria, locally rooted and resistant to the normative doctrines of outsiders, whether Muslim or British. Jhau Lal, a debaucher and syncretist, was an Awadhi patriot. Similarly Ali Ibrahim Khan, servant of the British, observed dismissively of their foremost enemy in south India, Haidar Ali, in the following terms: 'Apparently, he seems to be a Muslim; however, by heart he is akin to Hindus.' In 1857 in Delhi, again, it was the Urdu-speaking *menu peuple*, Hindu and Muslim, not the great Persian-speaking court nobles or poets, such as Ghalib, who were most often found supporting the royal family and the idea of Hindustan free from the British.

In the widest and weakest definition, of course, these Awadh revolts and others like them were 'subaltern' revolts. They were also conservationist revolts in defence of Indian forms of government and local cultural forms. One striking feature of them was that the strongest resistance came apparently from middling or aspiring groups in society, and not necessarily from the established oligarchy or upper bureaucrats, many of whom compromised with the British to retain their offices and perquisites.

In Awadh, locally born Hindus and Muslims of the writer castes were joined in resistance by lesser rural magnates and artisans of the towns. The grandest bureaucrats from outside the region and most members of the palace establishment went over to the side of the Company's protégés. The British complained that many of their enemies within the Indian polity—amongst the Marathas and the Sikhs, as well as in Awadh—were of 'low birth'. Upstart and debauched artists, singers, low favourites of the harems, eunuchs and favourites from among the military were repeatedly blamed. This was more than a mere insult. Men brought up in the regional homelands and committed to their cultural and religious institutions were more stubborn in their resistance than rootless aristocrats and itinerant pensmen. The final great act of Indian resistance before 1857, the stand of the Sikhs during the second Sikh war of 1849, was a revolt of Sikh soldiery and peasants supported by Hindu and Muslim allies against the weakness of the court in the face of British pressure.

British invasion focused and concentrated the energies of latent

Indian patriotisms. It also, of course, focused and magnified those broader attachments to religious community which cut across and sometimes subverted those patriotisms. We see this in the case of two resistance movements in the city of Benares between 1809 and 1811 which have attracted much attention from historians. One of these movements was a massive and complex strike against British taxation policies; the other a riot between Hindus and Muslims over the location of a temple.

Pandey has used these events to argue that the British were constructing a communal narrative and a communal history in which to bury the memory of Indian resistance.[46] The British rewrote the history of the communal riot, he implies, to erase the memory of the anti-taxation movement.

I would argue that both these events represent genuine social phenomena and illustrate the extent to which people could already tack between patriotic themes and traditions and patterns of religious community. The revolt against house tax invoked the idea of the 'customs and traditions of Hindustan' and was organized through a delicate interlocking pattern of corporate groupings which crossed the bounds of caste and religion.

Equally, though, the petitions produced during the Hindu–Muslim riot give evidence of an articulate history of grievance and victimhood among the Hindus of Benares which set them apart from their Muslim neighbours, largely independent of the actions of the British authorities. Independently again of any British creation of history, the petitioners argued that they had suffered discrimination under the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb and his local officers, but had been too weak to act. Now, with the waning of Muslim power in India, they could reassert their ancient rights and block the pretensions of the Muslim weavers on their sacred space.[47] The British, of course, seized on these indigenous histories with alacrity.

The concept of patriotism, which is being used here to explore areas of Indian behaviour under colonialism, goes beyond simple chauvinism and dislike of foreign rule. It is an active sentiment, and in its rational form a set of mobilized doctrines and a form of organization. The traditions of statesmanship it informed continued into the early nineteenth century. The Maratha politician Nana Fadnavis was a typical rational patriot in the Indian tradition. His 'autobiography'[48] demonstrates his commitment to humoural ideas and embodied virtue quite different from the sharp emphasis on caste purity and pollution evident among the

elites in the British period. He was an alchemist, a storer of special knowledges and a controller of forts in the style of the earlier Maratha Edict. He tried to preserve the Maratha Swarajya, not simply the Peshwa's dynasty.

Similarly, in the early nineteenth century Maharaja Ranjit Singh's prime minister Fakir Azizuddin was, as a contemporary British newspaper commented, one of the last of the 'oriental statesmen'. A barber-surgeon trained in both the Greek and Hindu styles of medicine, he became physician to the state as well as to its ruler. He discoursed freely on matters of natural philosophy. Under Azizuddin's tutelage the Punjab court became the centre of a network of itinerant teachers and physicians who moved across the whole country ministering to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.[49] This was no oriental despotism, nor a Sikh theocracy, but a corporate, patriotic homeland in creation, something its first major British historian, J.D. Cunningham, well understood.

The existence of themes of old patriotism alongside more particularist and community-centred ideals has been noted by J.S. Grewal and Harjot Oberoi, and recently elaborated by Jeevan Deol. Between 1760 and 1848 there emerged a definite idea of the Punjab, tied not only to the Sikh community, but also to a common homeland for Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. As in the Maratha case, the heroic ballad (in this case the *var*) could be used to express attachment to land and community as well as to honour great leaders. Shah Muhammad's *Jangnama* laments the taking of the state and the destruction of the nation or qaum by foreigners (*firangis*).[50] It notes that 'Hindus and Muslims have lot in common'. He cries: 'Hindus and Muslims used to be satisfied; now both are in trouble. Oh Shah Muhammad, a third community has never come into the Punjab before.' Of course, a ballad like this was not straightforwardly 'political'; it was an object lesson in the evanescence of worldly glory. Other traditions, some hostile to Ranjit Singh's kingdom of the Punjab, were also represented in contemporary popular ballads. Yet the sentiments of attachment portrayed here were more than loyalty to two provinces of the Mughal Empire, and to the royal house which had recently ruled them.

Over the century following the conquest of the Punjab, publicists and politicians slowly transformed old patriotism of this sort into a series of more exclusive attachments of different communities to land. This was particularly true of the Sikh Akalis who by the 1870s were portraying the Punjab as a land of the Sikhs polluted by the presence of cow-killing foreigners, the British. Consequently Shah Muhammad's ballad,

revised, published and republished many times from the 1850s, came, by the 1920s and 1930s, to be interpreted as a tale of specifically Sikh resistance to the British.[51] In this sense later nationalists and community activists can be said to have 'invented' the tradition of old Sikh patriotism. However, they had not done this *ex nihilo* or through a simple act of imagining the past in the image of a late-colonial present. What they had done was to slowly transform the discourse and sentiments of a continuing tradition of popular story-telling. That tradition, contested and distorted, still retained aspects of its blindness towards differences of community which could be called upon when Punjabis as a whole rose against colonial rule, as for instance at the end of the First World War. The manner in which active traditions of old patriotisms helped root, or sometimes frustrate, the emergence of Indian nationalism will be taken up in the next chapter.

Ideologies of Good Government, 1750–1820

Rational patriotism, however, was something that could animate even men who had entered British service. Right from the beginning of colonial rule, Indian administrators and learned men were expounding doctrines that anticipated Indian nationalist discourse. These doctrines were already being deployed to correct and constrain the new rulers. Some historians have pictured as collaborators the clerical servants of Mughal and post-Mughal regimes who were employed in British service as diplomats and writers. But many of these men were historians, students of government, and castigators of the corruption of modern times. Though most were Muslims and most insisted on the legal sovereignty of Islam, they were not exclusive and argued in the tradition of the 'Institutes of Akbar' that Hindus should be allowed to retain their own customs, rulers and customary assemblies. They tried to instruct their British masters in the need for wise counsel. They urged them to follow the precedents of Indian governments, to avoid violence, drunkenness and the influence of low persons.

Most important, as Kumkum Chatterjee[52] has pointed out, they instituted a new style of historical writing, a 'History of the Moderns', as opposed to a history of the great kings of Islamdom. This was patriotic philosophy teaching by historical example. Its exponents deplored the corruption of public office, and sought to re-found Indian polities, including the polity of the East India Company, on the right principles of Akbar's dispensation.

Muhammad Reza Khan, Robert Clive's deputy governor of Bengal,

himself from a physician family, produced a series of maxims of government to instruct the suspicious Warren Hastings. They are preserved in the Hastings Papers in the British Library.[53] Ghulam Hussain Tabatabai, aristocratic historian of Patna, wrote that the British were draining the wealth of India—this in 1780—monopolizing offices, destroying learned and noble families and assaulting the goodness of the land.[54] The Company had dismissed the public officers who had guaranteed equity under indigenous governments, and those that remained were all atheists, or had bought their offices. The Company had failed to ensure the circulation of goods, services and precious metal that guaranteed a healthy polity. The aristocratic cavalry had been dispersed; there was a scarcity of specie; but the Company still created monopolies which damaged the interests of Indian merchants and rulers. The British were aloof and racially prejudiced in their dealings with Indians, he added. The ideas of intrusive surveillance and bad counsel also feature in his objections to British rule in India: 'The head spy, in several of the best English houses, never fails to become their major domo, and the hinge on which turn most transactions, although he should be, as he is in general a man of the lowest clan and the vilest kind.'[55]

The writers of the old clerical class were, in fact, involved in a damage-limitation exercise, serving the Company merely as revenue collectors of the Mughal government. They were not necessarily collaborators or turncoats. They employed the principles of patriotism to argue for the protection of tombs, mosques and temples, for control of the violence of British soldiery and for local autarchy in times of famine. Like Ali Ibrahim Khan, administrator, poet and historian of the Marathas, they devoutly wished that the Marathas and the British, now essential elements of the wider imperial polity, could both be persuaded to bow in obeisance before 'the Emperor of Islam' for the good of land and people.

The chapter has continued to refer to old patriotism, but it is interesting how some spokesmen could quite quickly become embroiled in colonial debates, using modern means of communication. What emerged was a hybrid amalgam of Indian and European political ethics. Abu Talib Khan, for instance, came from this circle of literati and administrators of north India. Between 1793 and 1801 he travelled via the Cape to Ireland, England, continental Europe, the Ottoman Empire and Persia. He wrote a travelogue which throws a sceptical eye on the forms of government and society in all these lands. He complains in passing

about British government in India and implicitly compares it unfavourably with domestic British government; this of course was to be a classic discursive strategy of the Indian National Congress. Most interesting of all, Abu Talib refutes British ideas of the status of Indian women. The constant attack by Britons he met at social gatherings prompted him to write the resounding 'Vindication of the Liberties of the Asiatic Women'—this as early as in 1799. Here he claimed that Indian women were in a fortunate position because they controlled their husbands' finances and the marriage of their children, maintained authority over servants, teased their husbands and, ultimately, could divorce them.[56] The whole debate anticipated the one between the American activist Catherine Mayo and Mahatma Gandhi by more than a century. It also added an exotic element to a prolonged contemporary debate about the deportment and status of women in British journals. This had been stirred up by the vaunted immorality of the French Revolution the emergency of the Napoleonic wars.

Indians, then, responded flexibly, rationally and urgently to the mooting of British stereotypes at the time of conquest itself. Indians were acutely aware of parties and crises in the British domestic political system. Their plaints and critiques rose to a crescendo, for instance, during Warren Hastings' trial and at times when the East India Company's Charter was being revised by Parliament. While these emanations of patriotism might have been coloured by considerations of religion, region or caste, they were pitched more broadly. The next chapter traces the transformation of these themes from the early nineteenth century, through the events of 1857, to the first stage of nationalism after the Rebellion.

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3

Patriotism and Ethical Government, *c.* 1780–1860

The first two chapters attempted to apply the notion of patriotism to the pre-colonial and early colonial history of India in order to provide a context for understanding the Indian nationalism of the late nineteenth century. They argued that a sense of common homeland was emerging in some regions of India and, more broadly, in the great indeterminate heartland of north India, Hindustan. This sense of belonging was strengthened by popular religion, the emergence of vernaculars, rational doctrines of good government and an expanding network of commercial and political communications. Some British observers claimed the Indians did not care who came to rule over them, but the view of a French–Indian commentator who wrote that British conquest excited a 'subterraneous vein of national resentment' was no mere prejudice. Indeed, resistance to the English East India Company and the early revolts against it constituted a series of patriotic rebellions which linked together many nobles, artisans and plebeians.

Indians expressed patriotic ideologies, however, not only through armed revolt, but also by engaging the new British rulers in debate and controversy. Already in the 1770s and 1780s the late-Mughal genre of writing 'histories of the moderns' contained vigorous implied critiques of British government. The advice that some of the most 'loyal' of the Company's Indo-Muslim servants gave it was imbued with a sense of alarm. This chapter will show, first, how the engagement of the patriotic tradition and the Indian discourse of political ethics with the new British mediums of communication and debate created an early beginning for oppositional politics in India which pre-dated by two generations self-consciously nationalist critiques of British government. The chapter will reinterpret the revolt of 1857–9 in this light. Finally, it will show how the themes and memory of traditional patriotism and the old discourses

of good government were transformed and deployed by the first generation of conservative nationalists after 1860.

Public Debate and Old Patriotisms During the Conquest

The East India Company was an exploitative commercial despotism, but, crucially, it also introduced into India a constrained though vigorous sphere of public debate and surveillance of government. That sphere overlapped and energized the traditional Indian arena of aesthetic and political discourse which I have called the ecumene. It also alerted a wide swathe of the Indian population to the weaknesses as well as the strengths of British government. As Sir John Malcolm said, 'our Indian Empire is an Empire of opinion', and that opinion was often hostile and antagonistic. Our histories of the early nineteenth century as they are now written concentrate on cultural renaissance in Bengal and the economic consequences of Company rule. Indian 'politics' proper is generally thought to have begun about 1883, but that perspective is too short.

The first component of the emerging Anglo-Indian public sphere was an outgrowth of lobbying against the power and abuses of the East India Company by free merchants, disaffected Company servants and India-returned 'nabobs'. The plaints of merchants such as William Bolts, whose *Considerations on Indian Affairs* proved a best-seller in London in the 1770s, merged with a more philosophical objection to monopoly and tyranny voiced, above all, by Adam Smith and Edmund Burke. A constant assault on the Company as a monopolizer and tyrant rumbled on throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, reaching a crescendo at times when its Charter came up for periodic parliamentary revision in 1793, 1813 and 1833. Britons collected evidence to denounce and deprecate the Company, and this was spread both in Britain and India. During the debates on the Regulating Act of 1783, expatriate Britons voiced their objection to government intervention in the language of 'English liberties' which had resonated in America and in domestic radical circles over the previous twenty years. Indian critiques of the Company were influenced by this European public criticism. The Nawab of Arcot and, later, the Nawab of Awadh and the King of Delhi, sought to bypass the Company by sending ambassadors and petitions to British ministers and royalty, particularly at points when the Company was known to be in trouble in Parliament.

The dramatic events of the impeachment of Warren Hastings gave

a personal edge to the scrutiny of the Company by elite Indians. Writers in the patriotic tradition, such as Ghulam Hussain and Faiz Baksh, alluded to it in their histories and many clerical and commercial servants of Company officials had previously been brought into the conflict between Philip Francis and Hastings. What Sara Suleri has called 'the rhetoric of English India'[1] had both a British and an Indian component. In the event, it was Hastings' supporters and not his opponents who moved most forcefully to engage Indians in this political drama. After his departure for England in 1783, Warren Hastings' personal secretary, G.N. Thompson, organized a massive search for papers in Bengal, Benares and Awadh which he hoped would exonerate his master. This involved an examination of all Hastings' former 'paper holders . . . from peons through Fareshes, Dufteries and Sircars to the Naib of Cantoo Baboo', Hastings' 'man of business'.[2] Later, Thompson approached sympathetic officials such as Jonathan Duncan in Benares to secure Indian petitions in favour of the former Governor of Bengal. Ali Ibrahim Khan, Judge of Benares, another exponent of ethics, was approached as were important commercial families with an interest in credit and commercial stability.

These 'testimonies of esteem and affection' for Warren Hastings were to be made in the form of Mughal petitions and representations (*mahzar*s and *arzi*s), but they were designed for a different style of public. They were organized through institutions which in the Indo-Islamic system had historically rendered the 'sense of the neighbourhood' to the rulers. In Benares, 'Mussulmans' led by Ali Ibrahim Khan, the 'corporations' of Brahmins, merchants (*mahajan*s) and the ruling landholding community petitioned separately on Hastings' behalf. This reflected the differentiated but complementary form of debate about political ethics in the subcontinent.

In Lucknow, the Muslim judicial officers—the kazi and mufti—were to be responsible for this co-ordination of 'public opinion'. Thompson failed to procure a subscription for a statue of Warren Hastings because he was 'unable to familiarize the idea to the Hindoos, and the religious prejudice of the Mussalmans, I know, opposed it'.[3] The very fact that Indian magnates or commercial people were involved in political conflict between factions of British officials, necessarily gave a sense of political party to these struggles. Yet unlike the 'parties' of the former Mughal court, these parties took their plaints to a broader and more impersonal public in both Britain and India. Since the 'oppressive' form

of government he employed against Indians was one of the major charges against Hastings, the petitions went beyond the usual plaints of the Mughal petition to praise Hastings for his 'humanity'.

Before the turn of the nineteenth century, therefore, an Anglo-Indian public sphere, which sporadically engaged with Indians, had come into being. Its full emergence, however, awaited the redefinition of the Company's state during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. As the state became more distant, dignified and purposeful in its control of information, so the expatriate English press became more independent and broadly critical of government. Whereas James Hicky's scurrilous *Bengal Gazette* of the 1780s was a Grub Street rant against the social and sexual peccadilloes and tyranny of important people, the 'Jacobin' editors deported from Calcutta by Wellesley were feared as ideological radicals because of their criticism of the new constructive imperialist government. By frowning on public gambling, fornication, racial mixing and commercial dealings with Indians, as much as by insisting on government secrecy and dignity, Wellesley redefined both the state and, through it, the public sphere in India. The growing size of government and the increased volume of dealings between London, Calcutta and the interior inevitably increased the overall flow of information. In 1818 the *Calcutta Journal* marvelled at the 'increase in the flow of information coming to us by every ship and every mail'.[4]

The sharper conflicts between a government fortified with a sense of its own grandeur and dissident expatriate opinion inevitably unsettled Indians who appropriated the struggles of Anglo-Indians to their own discontents. People in the towns and bazaars spread rumours and hatched plots to the detriment of local officials at times of Charter revision. In 1813–14, for instance, Benares was awash with rumours that the English King was about to abolish the Company.[5] These merged with hostility to taxation. In placards, written handbills and verbal quips, the local authorities who had introduced house tax into the city were compared to Akbar's finance minister, Todar Mal, traditionally regarded as a scourge of the financial community. The idea was already being propagated that wealth was being drained from India by the Company—this theme had appeared as early as in Ghulam Hussain's tract of the early 1780s. But the Company itself was understood to be constitutionally vulnerable in a way that no previous Indian supreme government could possibly have been. While Indians had long been active on the sidelines of these expatriate debates and movements as pandits and writers, Wellesley's attempt to create in Fort William College an institution for the control and dissemination of Indian knowledge called forth

a more robust response. The Urdu Professor John Gilchrist was forced into retirement by complaints from Muslim scholars and conservative officials that the debates he initiated were insulting to Indian religions.[6]

About this time, P. Raghavia (Raghavan Iyer) became one of the first Indians to embark upon a public debate with the British on political and moral issues. The quiet counsel and moral preceptorship of the Indo-Islamic elite was replaced with sharper public controversy. In the writings of Raghavia and similar writers we see the old traditions of political ethics and regional patriotism transformed and projected into a broader arena. A former aide to several important British officers such as William Kirkpatrick, and an acquaintance of Wilks and Mackenzie, Raghavia must have stood high in British favour, as he was once considered for a position where he would act as 'a check' on Purnia, the powerful Diwan of Mysore.[7] He was 'brought up among' the British, but remained a committed Hindu. His work on geography and cosmology revealed a man trying to reconcile 'the fertile imaginations of the rishis [ancient sages]' with modern science. Yet it is striking to see him engage, through the good offices of William Kirkpatrick and the pages of the *Monthly Review*, 1804, with the slowly rising tide of British denunciation of Hinduism.

Newham of the Bengal Academy, Fort William College, Calcutta, made public an essay in which he attacked Hindu beliefs in the manner of James Grant and the evangelicals. This style of polemic gained momentum as a result of the open debates between students of the College in the course of their training. These confrontations took place in the presence of British official and the *munshi*s and pandits of the establishment who had extensive connections all over north India. Newham recited the usual litany of charges: *ghat* murder, *sati*, infanticide, sacrifices to the 'demon of destruction' (presumably Kali) and temple prostitution.[8]

Raghavia, who was here reacting to an attack on 'Hinduism' at an all-India level, entered a sophisticated defence of Hindu belief and practice which carefully avoided depicting 'Hinduism' as a rigid and essentialized tradition. He argued, in comprehensible English, that Newham had overplayed the tyranny of Brahminism, and cited the contributions to Hindu scriptures of non-Brahmin learned men. He noted, refuting the British tendency to view them as immutable, that the Shastras and the Puranas were inherently flexible and could be used to support 'moral improvement': 'The shastras are copious and from their equivocal style, our divine legislators gave us an opening to reform any part of them as change of circumstances and vicissitudes of time suggest.' He

quoted verses from the Vedas and Puranas which disapproved of all of Newham's 'abuses', dismissing the latter as 'local customs'. The tone of this work is similar to Ram Mohun Roy's pamphlets of a decade later, yet, unlike the Raja, Raghavia made no distinction between the Vedas and the later books of the canon. Unlike Ram Mohun Roy he venerated the tradition of Sanskrit teaching and Indian knowledges. This was a crucial distinction between the old patriot tradition of political argument and the bourgeois modernizers of Calcutta and Bombay.

What is most striking is that Raghavia's traditional defence of Hinduism and Indian integrity was combined with a critique of aspects of the Company's government which anticipated the arguments of the early Congress by nearly a century. The British, he said, might be inspired by 'humane principles', but too many officials were cut off from the people by their ignorance of languages. They relied on Indians 'recommended by the prejudices of long acquaintance, old service and accidental introduction, without regard to either rank, cast [*sic*], acquirements, talents or prudence'.[9] The emphasis on the need for the absolute integrity of royal counsellors and for them to be people of high status and lineage was a classical argument of both Indic and Indo-Muslim political ethics.

The involvement of Indians in these controversies about social practice and public doctrine could not yet arouse a mass response in Indian society. But there seems little doubt that the high tide of British conquest was accompanied by an acute watchfulness on the part of community leaders and religious authorities, and that tales of sinister events were passed rapidly from one end of the subcontinent to the other. In 1803, for instance, some ancient Syrian Christian brass plates were dug up in Malabar. This caused great excitement in the Anglo-Indian press because it was 'thought that if India was once Christian it would be so again'.[10] Indian opinion across the country seized on this quickly. In alarm, the Bombay Government suppressed the *Bombay Gazette* when it published a transcription of the brass plates, fearing that all 'Hindoostan would be aflame'.

The perceived new links between missionaries and an aggressive government were at the root of this tension. Secure in the belief that the government now looked more favourably upon them, the Serampore group of Baptists began a major campaign against Islam. Between 1804 and 1806 they published a small pamphlet called 'Some Account of Mahomed' and anti-Hindu works in which Hindu gods were called

'devils' and it was stated that 'Crishna only studied his own comfort'.[11] Brahmin treatment of Sudras was denounced in other pamphlets. Large numbers were printed in Hindustani, Bengali and Persian and many seem to have been distributed outside the Presidency. In 1805–6, the Baptist authorities went on to publish a pamphlet which insulted the Prophet: 'An account of a certain tyrant from his birth to his death.' This claimed that Mahomed had invented his revelation. What is most notable about these works is that they appear to have appropriated the existing forms of vituperation of the major religious traditions in popular communication. The attacks on the Prophet resembled in terminology polemics between Sunni and Shia, while the works directed at Hindus may have drawn on anti-Brahminical Vaishnavite hymns, such as those associated with the Bengali teacher Chaitanya. This probably indicates the important role played in their production by client writers.

These conflicts went beyond religious polemic. They bore on public doctrine and therefore on Indian politics. Missionary claims, moreover, struck at the heart of the political ethics disseminated by the *akhlaq* literature and its Indic analogues. Whereas in these works submission to God or the wise counsel of learned Brahmins fostered good government and good society, for the missionaries and their increasingly prominent supporters among the administrators, exactly the opposite was true. So-called 'religious controversy' provided one important lineage in the development of Indian politics. This was not because Indians were dominated by blind religious prejudice, but because, for them, political ideas and religious authority were in dialogue. This was true of much of Europe both before and after the Enlightenment.

Themes such as this reccurred quite often over the next fifty years in the writings, petitions and statements of Indians who engaged with British public opinion or the policies of the Company. They were voiced both by active opponents of the Company and by its disenchanted servants.

Another example will bring out the more specifically political element in old patriotic ideology. Ram Raz, an Indian judge at Bangalore in the now independent state of Mysore, became an important informant for the British in south India during the 1820s. Ram Raz was pre-eminently a cultural patriot. His most important work was the four-volume *Essay on the Architecture of the Hindus*, published by the Royal Asiatic Society in 1834. Ram Raz explained the principles of the ancient architectural texts, the Shilpashastras, and lauded Indian building methods.

He explicitly, and favourably, compared the temple architecture of southern India with European building. This brought him membership of the Royal Asiatic Society of London.

As with Raghavia and some of the conservative patriots of Calcutta, elegies on the glories of India's ancient arts and sciences had become an important component of their critique of British rule. Ram Raz's political sensibilities, however, centred on the Indic institution of *sabha*, a council of elders vested with advisory executive or judicial power. Ram Raz had been asked by a British official to consider the implications of the introduction of trial by jury amongst the inhabitants of south India. He gave his opinion that trial by jury would be greatly more acceptable to them than executive action or a sentence from the 'hand of a Mahomedan law officer'.[12] But this was because Indians themselves had an ancient system of jury representation in the sabha system which was constantly referred to in the classical Sanskrit law books. Not only that, the tradition could still be seen in use in places such as Maharashtra and Mysore, where it was now denominated by the name *panchayat*. These institutions were a testament to the 'exquisiteness and nicety of the Hindu character'.[13]

While Ram Raz's ideas were probably informed in part by the views of British commentators, such as Malcolm and Munro, on the excellence of India's village-level representative institutions, they resulted from what Irschick has called 'a dialogue'. British officials had picked up and transformed an Indian patriotic discourse, and then returned it to them.

Ram Raz went on to attack European characterizations of Indians as despotic and untrustworthy. It would be equally unjust, he said, to judge British culture and character by reference to the violent and debauched habits of the common soldiers and sailors who came to India. Most particularly, and here he again echoed Raghavia, Indian institutions were by no means vitiated by the tyranny of the Brahmins. This was the time when James Mill's assertions about the corruption and failure of Indian civilization as a result of the tyranny of the Brahmins were being given great publicity in Britain and India. On the contrary, Brahmins as a class, Ram Raz argued, never had specific privileges before the law, though pandits—teachers—who often happened to be Brahmins, were treated generously if they were of high moral character.

One reason the patriotic political debates of the early nineteenth century have been overlooked by historians is that politics has been rather narrowly defined. It is this that makes it possible for writers such as

Partha Chatterjee and Peter van de Veer to privilege religion in a narrow sense in their accounts of early anti-colonial resistance. But cultural debates were equally important. The rejection of British claims to hegemony in the arts and sciences was a highly political act, since the British 'empire of opinion' was explicitly legitimated in these terms. In this sense the numerous attempts by Indian authorities of the early nineteenth century to protect Indian learning both physically and intellectually from the ravages of the colonizers deserve attention. One thinks here of tracts written to assert the ancient virtues of Indian medicine, astronomy, grammar and the arts. Sometimes this took the form of claiming that Tamils, or Bengalis, or Maharashtrians had discovered western scientific principles before them, whether this was the heliocentric universe or the practice of vaccination. Sometimes it took the form of a complete rejection of western learning. At all events, classical scientific and intellectual authorities had already, in the early nineteenth century, been converted into culture heroes. Indians had put the astronomer Bhaskaracharya on a pedestal opposite Newton and Copernicus. The grammarian Panini faced down Sir William Jones.

Raghavia, Ram Raz and the numerous debaters and commentators on scientific and cultural matters were representative of one lineage of Indian political discourse which persisted throughout the early nineteenth century. It drew on themes of the virtues of homeland and good government which had originated before colonial rule. But some important transformations and ruptures had taken place. We are not arguing that these political ideologies and institutions simply flowed uninterrupted one into the other. First, Indian polities were now firmly subordinated. It is true that the Indian courts and the circles of other Indian magnates remained more important as active political centres than current historiography accepts, at least until 1858. Nevertheless, an obvious change was that, over much of the country, patriotic ideologies and the relevance of Indian political ethics were now often advanced by men who held only subordinate positions under the British even if they retained direct link of family or even personal memory to the pre-colonial order.

Second, these themes of right counsel and good government were now more often projected as virtues of pan-Indian, or, more specifically, Hindu and Muslim political traditions. Writers and commentators in this style remained acutely aware of the traditions of regional homelands whether these were the Tamil country or Maharashtra. But engagement with aggressive British ideas about India or about Hinduism

and Islam in general had caused them to cast their themes more broadly and to create more explicit histories. They were consequently ambivalent about the issue of religious community.

Some of the Hindu writers noted that Muslim kings had supported Indian learning and Indian institutions drawn from the Hindu tradition.[14] More often than not, as in the pre-colonial discourse, 'our' Muslims were counted as part of the broader homeland. It was rough 'Turks' or noted pillagers and invaders, such as Mahmud of Ghazni and Nadir Shah, who constituted the Other, not the common-or-garden Muslim. In the same way, the inheritors of the traditions of Hindustan writing in the Muslim tradition continued to praise the virtues of Hindu places of worship. Sayyid Ahmad Khan wrote a paean to the beauties of the city of Delhi in 1852. But he carefully included Hindu and Jain temples and the works of Hindu kings in his work.[15] On the other hand, the gradual widening of scale from the custom and righteousness of Bengal and Maharashtra (Maharashtra Dharma and Bangla Dharma) to Hindus generically tended to create exclusions and silences. The Muslim presence was often not explicitly recognized by the more traditional publicists of Bengal and Maharashtra.

Third, in the analysis presented in Chapter 1, we argued that old patriotism was formally distinct both from the universalizing ideology of the high Mughal and post-Mughal elite, on the one hand, and from the normative codes of Muslim law and 'Hindu' *shastra*, on the other. Now, however, old patriotism also needs to be distinguished from the new political themes that were emerging from the society created at the heart of British rule and in the enclaves of the international capital which had been established in the subcontinent.

Of course, this transformed old patriotism overlapped in some ways with the political ideas which were growing up in the great commercial centre of Calcutta and were voiced by celebrated reformers such as Ram Mohun Roy, Dwarkanath Tagore and the Young Bengal group of the 1840s and 1850s. Both traditions argued against the economic policies of the East India Company. Despite his view that Indian courts were corrupt, Ram Mohun Roy supported the interests of the impoverished Mughal Emperor, the King of Delhi, against the British.[16] But there were significant differences. Ram Mohun Roy and Young Bengal were apostles of free trade. They wished to reform the landholding system of Bengal to make the sale of land and the movement of goods more rapid. Many of them favoured the import of European capital into India to make up for the drain of wealth from India by the monopoly institutions of the

Company which they too saw clearly. The new men spoke in the language of positivism and political economy. The term proto-nationalism is one which this book has tried to avoid since it begs so many questions. But I agree with Soumitra De[17] that this line of thought formed a more direct precursor to the bourgeois nationalism of the early Indian National Congress after 1885 than the tradition considered here.

By contrast, the diverse strands of thought within the old patriotic traditions and discourses of political ethics continued to speak in the language of humours and virtues. They opposed free trade because that would throw skilled and learned men out of business. It was more supportive of Indian institutions and traditions, seeing merit even in the rulers of the princely states. It tried jealously to maintain Indian traditions in the arts and sciences in the old centres where they had flourished. It had closer connections to popular ideas. The 'proto-nationalists' and embryonic bourgeois apologists were closer to the new international businesses in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The rational patriots lived in the milieu of the older court centres, Lucknow, Benares or Pune, and were closer to old-style landed wealth, business and ritual services.

The persistence of the older tradition helps explain why the focus of Indian nationalist activity and thought was able progressively to switch, after 1900, from the colonial port cities to the still-rural and traditionally minded homelands of inland India. The result was often to be a mixing of ideologies and sensibilities, with later nationalist politicians employing the language of bourgeois nationalism in one domain while appealing to a sense of right government and hierarchical order in others, as Chapter 4 suggests.

The Patriotism of the Homelands in Transition

The actors so far discussed in this chapter had begun to speak of 'India', 'we Hindus' and of a broadly defined 'Hindustan', even if their understanding of these commonalities was still influenced by distinct regional perspectives. But beneath this slowly forming notion of broader nationality, the old patriotisms of the homelands also persisted in radically altered modes. The contrasting examples of 'Orissa', 'Gujarat' and 'Tamilnadu' will be taken up here.

As in other regions, the sense of 'Oriya-ness' emerged over the late medieval period in the context of a regional kingdom. But here the attachment of people from both the coastal plains and the upland valleys to the cult of Lord Jagannath at Puri was yet more critical in forming the subtle boundaries of a regional community. The Mughal destruction of

the images of Jagannath in 1558 invested the relationship between land, people and shrine with symbols of heroic defiance which were erased neither by Mughal nor later Maratha rule. Soon after the British conquered the region, they attempted to assimilate it into adjoining Bengal and Bihar. The conquerors also disbanded the hereditary force of the territorial militia, the Paiks. The Paiks subsisted on revenue-free grants, many of which had been passed down from the days of the last Hindu kings. The result was a massive revolt in 1817–18 in which the territorial militia attempted to retain their 'age old' right and property supported by the Jagannath temple priests and their Brahmin connections in the villages and small towns.[18]

Modern Oriyan 'nationalism', as it has been called, manifested itself more than a decade before organized Indian nationalism. In the severe famine of 1866 a common plaint was that the Bengalis and the British had between them looted and despoiled the land of Orissa. Disputes about the language of instruction in schools had, moreover, already caused a number of teachers and literati to proclaim that Oriya speech differed in critical ways from both Bengali and 'Hindi'. By the 1870s, the newspaper *Utkala Dipika* was preaching the glories of ancient Oriyan resistance and promoting the cry of 'Orissa for the Orissans'.[19]

The post-1860 movement clearly differed from the traditional patriotism of the Paik revolt, but there were nevertheless links between the two eras. Notably, the cult of Jagannath remained central to the sense of regional patriotism throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Some of the high-caste families who supported it could trace their roots back to priestly families who had served the Paiks. The Puri Temple Act of 1880, by which the British sought, abortively, to increase their control of the temple and to dispossess the royal house associated with it, gave great impetus to the Orissa movement.[20] Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries the boundaries of the aspiring province of Orissa were defined by the living and evolving relations of devotion between its people and Lord Jagannath. Orissan identity was thus sprung into action by the pressures of British rule and Bengali immigration, but its meaning can only be understood in the context of traditional Oriyan patriotism.

Gujarati identity, so important as a building block of wider Indian nationalism, could trace a comparable lineage. The old kingdom of Gujarata Desh was envisioned by the old aristocracy and by the Jain saints who lauded its places of spiritual power. This incipient sense of charismatic territoriality survived Gujarat's transformation into a

Muslim province and its later partitioning between the Marathas and the British. It was under late Mughal rule, indeed, that the poet Premanand first used the word 'Gujarati' to describe its particular language.[21]

The rapid reconstitution of Gujarat's commercial society and the continuities of family, occupation and worship embodied in the urban merchant corporations (mahajans) of the province were the foundations of a strong local pride which was already apparent in the 1830s and 1840s. Kavi Narmada Shanker[22] sang songs of praise of the homeland in the 1850s and 1860s. Diwan Hargovinddas[23] wrote of patriotism, of *swadeshi* and *swadeshabhiman*, in the 1860s and 1870s, well before the protection of home industries had become a national issue. Of course, the British were once again a formative influence in the creation of regional political sentiment. Alexander Forbes and the Gujarat Vernacular Society legitimated and institutionalized Gujarati cultural identity. The pressures of British imports added a critical edge to the cry for protection and conservation. Yet, to a much greater extent than in Bengal, Gujarati identity evolved along indigenous and not western lines.

Madras, the would-be Tamilnadu, forms a final example of continuity and ruptures in old patriotisms. The existence of a long vernacular cultural tradition in Tamil verse and Tamil sentiment, tying people to the land and to memories of past deeds, is attested to in the ballads collected in the first few years of the nineteenth century by Colin Mackenzie.[24] In practice, this sense of Tamil right conduct was invested in the building of temples, choultries or rest houses, and wells by pious and wealthy men generation after generation. What stirred merchants and the literati to defence of the 'custom' (*mamul* or *dharma*) of the Tamil country were the shocks administered to this sense of place and tradition by the influx of missionaries and by the British sequestration of ancient land grants during the *inam* enquiries of the 1830s and 1840s. Tamils protested against the loss of their 'civil and religious rights'—for the two were inseparable—in modern organizations such as the Madras Native Association.[25] Many of its supporters, however, were men of a traditional mentality who supported *sanatana dharma*, the order of the castes and ancient rights.

In the small towns and the countryside, related organizations sprang up in defence of custom and religion which owed little to western precedents. The Sacred Ash Society marked the bodies of its initiates with the ash of Shiva's sacrifice to signify their hostility to Christianity.[26] In Tinnevelly town and elsewhere, riots against Christians in 1857 focused specifically on the burial of these polluted outcasts in the sacred land

and the procession of their biers along royal streets. As Frykenberg implies,[27] these were not simply 'religious' riots, but marked a more general resistance to perceived violations of the custom and deities of the land. The aim of the ruler in the old tradition of political ethics had been to preserve these traditions, and to expel the polluted and the unworthy from the urban community.

To a greater or lesser extent, themes of the protection of religion and tradition merged in the late nineteenth century with the imperatives of western-style representation and nation building in the agenda of the first generation of Indian nationalism, as the next chapter will show.

Imperial Patriotism?

Even in the early nineteenth century the more sensitive colonial observers were aware of these trends of opinion and sought deliberately to co-opt and contain them. This was one of the main purposes of the expansion of public instruction by the reforming Whig government of the 1830s. Public instruction was much more than simply providing English-educated Indians for government service. It was a cultural strategy designed to tie Indian patriotisms, or 'nationalisms' as they were then called, into the Empire. The much-reviled orientalists, who were apparently swamped by the utilitarian deluge of the 1830s, instinctively understood the value that many Indians still attached to Indian modes of representation, communities of language, cultural performances and the sciences. When H.H. Wilson and his supporters defended Sanskrit and Arabic learning against the jibes of Ram Mohun Roy who considered it antiquarian, they were not simple reactionaries. They were aware that the teaching of classical languages and the sciences lay at the heart of a set of ideologies and institutions which continued to command elite support and popular veneration at hundreds of smaller centres throughout the subcontinent, far removed from the abodes of the nouveaux riches in Calcutta and Bombay. It is correct to see the magnates of the Calcutta Dharma Sabha as neo-traditionalists, inventing a tradition of Sanskrit learning and widow immolation in the context of an early capitalist city. Still, this should not obscure the existence of less factitious traditions in other, older centres.

By modern definition, empires cannot foster nationalism. Ethnic-based nationalism fortified with notions of citizenship would risk exposing the contradictions of foreign rule and exploitation and disrupting the ethnic balance designed to divide and rule. In the case of the Qing Empire it has been argued that attempts to reinvent a Manchu-led proto-nationalism actually brought about a resurgence of ethnic Chinese

sentiment.[28] But empires cannot base themselves only on force and interest. British India, for instance, as Sir John Malcolm noted, was a mental construct: it ultimately rested on an ideological hegemony, 'or that respect and awe with which the comparative superiority of our knowledge, justice and system of rule, have inspired in the inhabitants of our own territories'.

That respect and awe could be afforced by a culture of loyalism. The Company tried, but ultimately failed to foster such loyalty among its Indian troops. After 1858, the Government of India tried with somewhat greater success to encourage loyalty to the Crown among its Indian subjects. The culture of loyalism in India is a neglected and politically embarrassing phenomenon, which needs to be studied. The British rulers could also attempt to propagate a limited form of Indo-British patriotism among the elites which served them. From the 1830s onwards, men brought up within the new systems of public instruction and destined for subordinate government service were encouraged to disseminate a sense of Indian pride under the aegis of the British Crown. They engaged with the new Anglo-Indian public sphere of debate through newspapers and public meetings.

Alongside this, local governments, especially those in Bombay and the North-Western Provinces, put in train a propaganda effort through translations of short texts and useful knowledge into Indian languages. Some officials even patronized the akhlaq literature, at least in its domestic, didactic form.[29] Subordinate Indian servants and employees of the departments of public instruction translated and circulated vast numbers of small pamphlets for use in schools and private homes during the years 1830–50. From time to time the tame servants of the Company's government bit back and criticized it. Mohan Lal and Shahamat Ali, two products of the English department of the Delhi College, criticized the Indian government's Afghan policy during the disastrous war of 1838–42.[30] They achieved publicity in Britain and earned bad marks from the Company's government for complaining that foreign policy failures damaged the contentment of the Indian people under British rule.

Under the surface of this vaunted imperial loyalism, however, something more interesting was happening. The textbook writers and clerks of the department of public instruction were promoting a vision of India in which the British played only a contingent part. Babu Shiva Prasad of Benares, for instance, was a noted loyalist right through to the 1880s when he was engaged in controversy with spokesmen of the early Indian National Congress. On the few occasions he criticized the government

over land revenue policy, for instance, he was slapped down and quickly backed off. Yet his massive programme of textbook translation reveal something more complex: an attempt to foster patriotic instincts among children and pride in the regional traditions of Indian virtue and manliness. His book of edifying tales in Hindi for young women, *Vamamanoranjana*, exalts the regional language and Bengali, Marathi and Hindustani heroines of antiquity and the recent past. The eighteenth-century female ruler Ahalya Bai Holkar chose not to die on the funeral pyre of her husband, but to live and manage her estates and her polity as a '*dharmik stri*', a woman of piety.[31] The pious public acts of Ahalya Bai and other men and women are lauded in many similar texts. Patriotism, in a distorted form, could coexist with loyalism, even pathetic dependence on the British government. It could also coexist with a form of Hindu assertion. In the works and speeches of Shiva Prasad and some of his Bengali contemporaries we see the emergence of a distinct notion of India. But it is an India marked out by the ancient grid of Hindu pilgrimage places and energized by the conspicuous acts of the Hindu pious.

There is less room here for the locally integrated Muslim community; too often in these works the pious Indian is marked out by resistance to the brutality of a Muslim ruler, whether this be in relation to figures of medieval history, such as the Muslim invaders Muhammad of Ghazni and Malik Kafir, or eighteenth-century Muslim rulers. The same tendencies are in evidence on the Muslim side. Sayyid Ahmad Khan inherited the rationalistic tendencies of the eighteenth-century munshis. He sought to teach and mould the brutality and ignorance of British officials and bring useful knowledge and rational religion to his co-religionists. At least until the 1850s he seems to have remained loyal to the notion of a unified Hindustan of both Hindus and Muslims. In his topographical and historical works of the 1840s and 1850s he goes out of his way to praise the achievements, intellectual and spiritual, of Hindus and Muslims, which were now made safe under the aegis of British rule. We should not read back the Sayyid Ahmad of the 1880s who said that India was a land of 'two nations' into the era before 1857.[32]

Yet having said this, it seems that some of the Indian 'collaborators' of the British government in the early and mid-nineteenth century as much as the resisters need to be taken seriously as participants in the discourse of Indian patriotisms. In ideology and connections they provide as firm a transitional link between the political traditions of the late eighteenth century and the early days of Indian nationalism, as the more shadowy figures of overt resistance. Their tone was different from

the figures usually taken to be exemplars of proto-nationalism in India, that is Ram Mohun Roy and the Young Bengal movement of the 1830s–50s in Calcutta.

Religion and Popular Anti-colonial Critiques Under Company Rule

Traditional patriotism, it was argued, was more than a mere feeling. It was associated with and 'fixed' in particular locales and inherited a set of doctrines concerned with humoural balance and political representation. It was a socially active sentiment of attachment to land, language and cult, and it was predicated on social communication and a network of knowledge.

Evidently, the mutiny of the Madras army at Vellore in 1806, ostensibly because of fears over conversion, made officials unusually sensitive to the notion that Indians were on the point of revolt on matters of religion.[33] But these exaggerated fears may have had some basis as far as they concerned the rapid dissemination throughout India of concern about the political status of religion. Indigenous texts on the danger to religion were circulated and itinerant holy men incorporated them into their sermons. Puppeteers and wandering players spread anti-British messages and eulogies of the martyred Tipu Sultan throughout central and south India in the months before the Mutiny. G. Cunninghame even claimed to pick up echoes of these events in Delhi, 'the focus for all the discontents and intrigues of the Mussulman population in India'.[34] Akbar Shah II, the new King of Delhi who succeeded in 1806, was well informed by 'malicious' courtiers; later, the 'Bareily business [the anti-house tax riot of 1816] was organized at Delhi and an acquaintance with what was going on at Vellore previous to the massacre was also traced back to this centre of sedition'. What was being depicted here was a legitimist 'King's party' drawing on the symbols of legitimate rule and ideologies of ethical government.

While the dismal picture conveyed by Europeans and Indian reformers was of a society where the communication of knowledge was stunted by hierarchy, there is much evidence to the contrary. Indians were rapidly informed by newsletters, private letters and the intelligence of runners about the politics of distant homelands. They identified with the struggles of distant peoples against colonial expansion and were well informed about the critique of the East India Company mounted in Britain. Many times during the early nineteenth century, news of political changes in Britain and disasters for the British in Asia were passed

quickly along the lines of an Indian public which crossed the boundaries of region, caste and kingdom.[35]

Patriotism, then, was a sentiment and a network of communication as well as a set of doctrines. There is plenty of evidence that such ideas as the drain of wealth from India and the pollution of India by the vile habits of her conquerors achieved wide popular currency throughout the nineteenth century. One Indian savant constantly alluded to the violent drinking habits of the conquerors, a theme which was often linked to that of the supposed looseness of their women.[36] The notion that European medicines and food were polluted with cow and pig fat surfaced in the bazaars again and again long before the Company's army rose in mutiny in 1857. We have tended to regard this as religious fanaticism. Yet if we accept that Indian ideas of moral code and human substance were profound, ancient and adaptable, then such reactions seem more measured than fanatical. No one views seventeenth-century English ideas of the body politic as fanatical because they do not accord with modern germ theory.

Other themes which draw from the earlier ethical and political traditions appear in the interstices of colonial political debates. In the early nineteenth century the British demolished many of the forts of recalcitrant rulers in an attempt to pacify the country. Local people saw this as a humiliation of India, almost an emasculation—'*Hindustan ka nak kat gaia hai*': 'India's nose has been cut off', a loss of both substance and honour to rulers and people.[37] Forts, as was clear from texts such as the 'Ajnapatra', were not simply military strong points. They were residues of skills, honour and legitimacy. The silver released from their treasuries fructified the country and renewed its commerce. The effect of British rule, as William Sleeman was told, was not simply to drain wealth from the country but to disturb its humours and render it literally barren.[38]

Again, the often fierce reaction to Christian missionary propaganda does not mean that India was a society which could not see beyond religion. It was a style of life as well as a series of doctrines which Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, rejected. The doctrines of Christianity were in themselves perfectly neutral for many Indians. What was hated were the pretensions of its missionaries and the life-style of its adherents. As one Indian soldier said: 'Christianity is the lowest religion. Christians are the vilest caste.' Christianity compromised patria. As one Hindu holy man screamed at a missionary who was attempting to enter a nominally independent native state: 'We do not want your Jesus here, the Company has no authority here.' For both Indians and Britons religion

and political authority went hand in hand. Of course, many Company officials even in the 1840s and 1850s were wary of missionary activity. All the same, those who espoused the type of Protestant evangelicalism that had been reinvigorated by the national emergency of the Napoleonic wars had become lodged in many exalted positions in the Company's military and political service.

It was only slowly that the British came to realize the potential of the new Indian vernacular press of the 1820s and 1830s. The reforming Whigs among them tended to think of it as benign, a repository of useful knowledge spread to Indian elites. The real threat according to this view came from English expatriate newspapers, particularly those with a sectional or Tory stance. But many conservative officials and expatriates were sceptical. Some complained that Persian newspapers based in Calcutta and distributed in upper India were slandering British officials posted at the Awadh and Lucknow courts. Others complained that though print-runs were small, newspapers were passed around so quickly among Indians that 'seditious' ideas were circulated widely among the populace. The pro-British prime minister of Hyderabad urged the Calcutta authorities to suppress vernacular newspapers during the Afghan war lest they 'seduce the people from their allegiance to the Company'.[39]

The perceived threat was not confined to the vernacular press. Several commentators noted that the young men who had been trained in the few English-teaching institutions in Delhi and Benares were discontented and unemployed. They often ended up as writers and publicists for rajas and other magnates who used them to raise public campaigns against officials they disliked, drafting plaints, petitions and letters to English newspapers.[40] The common view that the Indian states before 1857 represented a 'husk culture' of a dying society is surely an anachronism caused by our knowledge of what was to happen in 1857. It seems equally possible that a form of nationalism might have developed in the subcontinent more akin to that of southeast Asia, particularly Malaya and Indonesia. Here the older royal centres continued to play an important role in the articulation of nationalist ideologies and organizations right up to Independence in the twentieth century. In India, princely centres might also have remained important hubs of traditional political ideology, spreading their message through the new means of communication, and providing a conservative strand parallel to liberal nationalism. Certainly, the Rebellion of 1857 was a war of publicity and opinion, not simply a revolt of the backwoods.[41]

As far as it can be reconstructed, the conservative Indian dissent of

the generation before the Rebellion expressed in petitions, newspapers and letters to the editors of English newspapers harped on the themes which the previous sections have been tracing from pre-colonial times into the colonial period. The virtue and wealth of the land was exhausted by foreign government. Indian institutions and old centres of power should be preserved, not subjected to the harsh and unsympathetic rule of the Company. The largesse of princes and magnates guaranteed the livelihoods of hundreds of thousands of learned men and artisans. British rule would snuff out this glorious diversity.

If there was a future it lay in a combination of the remaining free Indian states and outside powers. The Burmese, Afghans, Persians, Russians, sometimes the French and, most bizarrely, the Americans, were candidates for this role. For instance, a Delhi newspaper, the *Kiran-as Sadin*, wrote in 1847 that the British had saved India from the raids of bandits and foreign plunderers, but everyone was tied down by an inflexible law: 'The English hold all the appointments and in this manner all the wealth of Hindustan is every year drawn away by them.'[42] The government of Farangistan—France—was even worse, but the writer ends with an ambiguous reference to throwing off English rule and replacing it with American. During the same period, British officials were openly canvassing the annexation of the rump of the semi-independent state of Awadh—something they accomplished ten years later. The *Sudhakar* of Benares, one of the first newspapers published in the Devanagari script, fiercely defended the independence of Awadh and the extinction of its court, 'which despite its prevailing vices is still a refuge for fallen nobility and affords encouragement to untold numbers of handicraftsmen and men of genius'.[43]

Alongside this rhetoric of social protection, the twenty years before the Rebellion mark the emergence of a much sharper indigenous rhetoric of religious defence. As evangelical pretensions in the administration of north India grew more apparent with the rise of the Thomason school in the North-Western Provinces, Herbert Edwardes on the Punjab frontier of British rule and a new generation of evangelical teachers in the colleges of the Presidency towns and Pune, several prominent scholars took up the defence of Hinduism through Sanskrit, English and vernacular pamphlets and in lecture tours and speeches. As Avril Powell has shown, with the shock of the 1833 and 1838 famines and the spread of Christian-run orphanages in the North-Western Provinces, Muslim spokesmen also began to preach vigorously and to

sound alarm bells for their co-religionists.[44] As an earlier generation of historians understood it, these fears provide a general, if not a specific, background for the outbreak of the 1857 Rebellion.

The 'secular' historical tradition of Indian nationalism found it quite difficult to find an appropriate place within the narrative to lodge this type of cultural patriotism. Historians were uneasy with something that seemed to foreshadow the Hindu and Muslim 'revivalism' which was felt to have muddied the waters for the later progressive nationalism of the Indian people. A re-evaluation of the role of religious themes, even of religious language, in Indian nationalism has been further delayed by the extreme sensitivity of contemporary historians to the charge that movements such as this form the nineteenth-century antecedents of Hindu chauvinism and Islamic fundamentalism. Finally, any stress on the importance of 'religious' or caste themes in Indian political mobilization has sometimes been taken to be a form of 'orientalism' which denies Indians rational political agency. Yet it would be absurd to ignore religious themes in nineteenth-century European history because there is a danger of portraying Europeans as priest-ridden.

There are some signs of change, however. On the one hand, Peter van der Veer has tried to show that the sense of nationality in India had always had a strong rootedness in religious themes and sensibilities. His argument states in a general form what had long been known to historians of nationalism, but he does not entirely escape the charge that he has to some degree himself 'essentialized' the nature of Hinduism through time. From a different political perspective Partha Chatterjee re-evaluated his earlier insistence that Indian nationalism was a 'derivative discourse' to argue that religion and the domestic sphere provided redoubts in which Indians could regroup and from which they could later sally forth to assault the evil of colonialism.[45] While a welcome acknowledgement of the importance of the issue of religious nationalism, Chatterjee also seems to reify a dubious dichotomy between a western-dominated public sphere and the world of the home and faith.

It may be better to see religion as a bed of metaphors and a set of practices in the indigenous public sphere in which patriotic and implicitly anti-colonial themes could be expressed without the danger of incurring political repression. This is reminiscent of the arguments of Sandria Freitag with regard to the role of religious festivals as arenas for the representation of corporate solidarities.[46] It needs to be added, however, that Hindu and Muslim spokesmen also used forms of rational

debate, publicity and organization to express a wider patriotism and a concern for property, livelihood and honour. They were not simply representing the sense of community in a domain which the colonial power did not regulate.

A most important but little-cited work on this issue is Richard Fox Young's *Resistant Hinduism*,[47] which charts the response of a number of classically trained Indian intellectuals to Christian missionary activity in the period 1820–60. Young's work derives from the intellectual tradition of inter-faith dialogue and therefore concentrates on 'religion' rather than 'politics'. He also assumes the existence of a prior category, 'Hinduism', rather than seeing such a category actually being created in the course of these debates. Nevertheless, the political importance of what several of his authors write is clear.

One significant point made in Young's work is that the common understanding of Hinduism as an endlessly 'tolerant' and absorbative faith is greatly overdone. Instead, for the protagonists of Hinduism he studies, all other religions, if they were religions at all, were ultimately of lower grade and had less capacity to generate salvation than Hinduism. This was because worship, austerities and physical and mental disciplines carried out on the sacred land of India, Bharat Khand, were necessarily and always infinitely superior to any form of low religion carried out elsewhere.[48] Men such as the Maharashtrian mathematician and Sanskrit scholar Subaji Bapu and Harakchandra Panchanana, his Bengali contemporary, believed that different religious systems (dharmas) were appropriate to different races (*jatis*) throughout the world, just as within India different castes (jatis again) were imbued with different levels of capacity to apprehend the godhead.[49] Races within and outside India were thus hierarchically ranked. But all within India were superior to all outside because the very land of India, linked to a grid of power by pilgrimage, oblation and sacrifice, conferred supreme merit on those who lived in it.

These men would, in their measured and scholarly way, have agreed with the sepoy who stated that 'Christianity was the lowest religion, Christians the vilest caste'. Their work, however, also projected the notion of the superiority of the land and people of India, their bio-moral excellence, in a way which formed a direct link between the earlier pandit schools and the cultural nationalists of the late nineteenth century. While they were indeed reacting to premonitions of western cultural imperialism, it is not useful to see these men as inventors of a tradition *ex nihilo*. They were refashioning and passing on an oral and

textual tradition that had not died. Nor is it very useful to see them as reactionaries. Subaji Bapu like many of his pandit contemporaries accepted much of the worldly western science which was presented to him while still revering the memory of the great Indian scholars of the past.

Thus, at the same time that writers in the new vernacular press were urging the protection of Indian courts and Indian artisans in the language of old patriotism, other spokesmen deeply rooted in the pandit schools of the old society, but aware of the western moral hegemony, were formulating a cultural patriotism which asserted the excellence of old religion and the glory of great Indian intellectuals. Even more than Subaji Bapu, for instance, Bapu Deva Shastri, a Maharashtrian astronomer who had emerged from the orientalist circles of the Benares College, was urging the excellence of medieval Indian astronomy. He argued, for instance, that the classical mathematician Bhaskaracharya had invented differential calculus a thousand years before it had been understood in the West.[50] Of course, the praise of Indian astronomical and mathematical arts took up a theme which the eighteenth-century French *philosophes* had developed much earlier.

Bapu Deva and his contemporaries, however, had not 'reinvented' Bhaskaracharya, for their work emerged out of a tradition in which he had always been revered, read and used for practical application in the world of ritual astronomy and astrology. They simply made him real, endowing him with a personality as powerful as that of Newton and Halley, about which they and their children were hearing so much in British schools. Much the same transfer from the realm of textual reference to real history was occurring in the case of other great men of the Indian past: Panini, the grammarian, Chaitanya, the Bengali bhakti saint, and the great kings of Indian antiquity.[51] This too was the language of old patriotism, not merely 'religious revival' because it sought to preserve quite specific continuing traditions and practices, rather than simply retreating into a domestic world of spirituality or building up an entirely new faith which was no more than a mirror image of Christianity.

The Rebellion and the Patrias

These themes of the defence of patria were violently manifested during the Rebellion of 1857. There is still little evidence that the events of the Mutiny were peasant rebellions in the sense of rebellions by peasants as a class against the class bias of British rule. They were, however, more than the concatenation of magnate grievances which historians,

including myself, depicted in the 1960s and 1970s. This was decidedly a set of patriotic revolts, picking up on many of the older themes of land and kingship. The theme of pollution which surfaces on numerous occasions in rebel statements and proclamations takes on new meaning if put in the context of the humoural and biomedical doctrines that have been considered. The revulsion against greased cartridges was echoed in the insurgent's pamphlet 'Advice to the Royal Army'. This reported that British doctors had been polluting them with their medicines. One doctor, it was said, had given an Indian patient a medicine with which he had gargled. 'In ointments prepared by medical men, the fat of pigs, wine, etc. is employed',[52] the author wrote. The British took this to be a statement about caste; but many Indians feared a wider pollution embracing Hindus and Muslims, land and people.

David Baker, Tapti Roy and Rajat Ray[53] have all used the word patriotism to describe the motivating force of the Rebellion. They rightly wish to argue that the rebels' ideology went beyond a legitimist movement to restore princely power and Mughal overlordship. Implicitly they also want to see it as more than subaltern resistance, the protest of an oppressed peasantry against the invasion of capitalism and the colonial state. Rajat Ray takes the argument farthest, observing perceptively that the rebels were attempting to rid Hindustan—a word repeatedly invoked—of foreign domination. There was a definite sense of attachment to place which transcended the boundaries of class and the little community of the village. While religious community was recognized, most of the rebel leadership emphasized repeatedly that Hindustan was a land both of Hindus and Muslims.[54]

Given the emergence of the notion of Hindustan as a valued homeland discussed earlier, this argument is an attractive one. Nevertheless, two additional points need to be made about Ray's approach, one positive and one negative. The negative point is that the rebel discourse during 1857 shows not so much the congealing of a notion of a common Hindustan, but the strains that were now afflicting that sentiment. These strains were both a result of British policies of 'divide and rule' and of the movements of community revitalization which had grown in strength during the early nineteenth century. If anything, the notion of religious community had strengthened since the mid-eighteenth century and was now threatening to rupture the concept of Hindustan. By banning the slaughter of cows and emphasizing the common religious and political grievances of the rebels, the insurgent leaders avoided the degeneration of the Rebellion into competing religious factions. But the strain was

real. To say that Hindus and Muslims had a common stake in Hindustan was not so far from Sayyid Ahmad Khan's later nostrum that Hindus and Muslims were 'two nations' that simply happened to live in the same land. And after all it was Sayyid Ahmad Khan who most vigorously argued that the Rebellion had sown the seeds of Hindu–Muslim enmity. By 1857 the notion of the common homeland of Hindustan was under threat.

Some of the complexities of the situation are brought out in the proclamation of Nana Sahib of Kanpur, who set himself up as Peshwa, inheritor of the leadership of the Maratha state. Nana Sahib proclaimed his war against the British in the name of the Mughal Emperor.[55] He also stressed what were apparently religious themes, referring to the treacherous British as *kafirs* and claiming that he was ordained by God to punish the unbelievers and to restore religion. On the face of it, this was a religious revolt in the heart of a decaying universal empire. What is significant, however, is the manner in which the term kafir has been broadened out. It was being used here by a Hindu prince, albeit in a Persian document. The usage denotes something more like 'national enemy' than 'idolatrous foe of the [Islamic] faith'. The point is confirmed later in the proclamation where the author notes that 'the Chinese also have declared war against these ''Kaffurs'' and the latter having no army to send against the Chinese are much alarmed'. The text suggests, moreover, that the British were not kafirs because of their irreligion as such but because of their arrogance, destruction of property and injustice to the populace. The author used the language of religious vilification and called on Hindus conjointly with Muslims precisely in order to transcend religion and appeal to a sense of wider community.

Elsewhere in the proclamation Nana Sahib's writer invokes two territorial entities. The first is 'Hindustan', from which the British must be expelled. Here the usage seems to signify the boundaries of the old Mughal heartland. This was the sense in which the eighteenth-century Maratha chroniclers asserted that Persians and Afghans had never had dominion within Hindustan. At the same time, Nana Sahib states that his aim is to 'protect our country',[56] by which he means the Maratha Desh, and to 're-establish the Hindoo and Mahomedan kingdoms' and states that 'I have conquered the land north of the Nerbuda river'. The actions of Nana Sahib and other rebel leaders in seeking totally to annihilate Europeans, Indian Christians and groups seen to be dependent on them, such as Bengalis, also seemed to bespeak an implacable hatred of the Other who had polluted the country.[57]

A second point emerges from Ray's argument. We need to go beyond the sentiment of attachment to land in developing the notion of patriotism. For we can also see obscurely in some of the rebel proclamations the other elements that facilitated patriotism: ethical political doctrine and ecumenical communication. Rebel themes which go back beyond the eighteenth-century administrators to the pre-colonial political theory concerned the corruption of the indigenous public offices under colonialism and the British patronage of mean and low persons. The will and desires of the people could no longer be represented to the rulers because the springs of good counsel had been polluted. This was a point that even the 'loyalist' Sayyid Ahmad Khan made after the Rebellion had been suppressed. Rulers, both Hindu and Muslim, sought to restore the office of *kotwal*, kazi and mufti, and to link government to ethical and customary law once again. As Tapti Roy has pointed out, the word '*din*' or 'faith' used by the rebels was not a call of religious fanaticism or *jihad* as the British portrayed it.[58] In this context 'din' meant more like custom, moral path, proper deportment.

One proclamation of the Awadh government, for instance, seemed quite directly to echo the akhlaq ideology in its most inclusive form. Unlike the situation under British government, under 'native' government

> [no one] interferes with religion. Everyone is allowed to continue steadfast in his religion and persuasion, and to possess honour according to his worth and capacity, be he a person of good descent of any caste or denomination, Sayyid Sheikh, Moghul or Pathan, among the Mohammedans, or Brahmin, Chuttree, Bais or Kaith amongst the Hindoos.[59]

The British by contrast were accused of oppressing the respectable and exalting the lowly Chamar (sweeper). Households were violated and women unsafe under foreign government.

The restoration the rebels sought, therefore, was not that of Islam or Hindu dharma in a limited sense, nor simply particular royal lineages. What they demanded was the restoration of the Indo-Mughal patrias within the broader constellation of Mughal legitimacy, animated by mutual respect and a healthy balance between lands and peoples.

Continuities and Ruptures After the Rebellion

The Rebellion has always seemed to be an important rupture in modern Indian history. The changes in governmental structures, the coming of the railway, faster penetration of the Indian market by British goods and

the rapid pace of class formation in the Presidency cities support this view. There were some continuities, however, across the chasm of 1857 in older centres and away from the Presidencies, even where the British reconquest had wreaked the greatest havoc. Despite a heavy battering, parts of the old intelligentsia and the landed classes of northern and western India survived the upheavals. The themes of traditional patriotism were still heard after the Rebellion and the carriers of the ideology were similar types of people.

One place to look for the persisting tradition is the vernacular press and pamphlet productions of the 1860s and 1870s, the period before new themes of a distinctively modern nationalism became prominent. The British had been alarmed by the opposition of much of the press of Bihar, central India, the North-Western Provinces and Oudh, and the Punjab during 1857–9. They took greater pains to control 'sedition' and restrict editors after the Rebellion. But that does not mean that these expressions of opinion should be discounted. On the contrary, severe critiques of government and society drawing heavily on the themes of old patriotism and Indian political theory were still voiced in book and pamphlet form, though very often such arguments were dressed up in the guise of loyalism.

Ironically, the very institution of the Crown as the ultimate guarantor of the legitimacy of British rule in India gave sanction to old patriots to critique the colonial government while discoursing effusively on the virtues of the Royal Family and British civilization in the abstract. What might seem unadulterated loyalism on the surface was often, on closer inspection, a continuation of more traditional modes of opposition from within a cocoon of loyalism. A number of by-now familiar themes resurfaced. These were: bad counsel given to kings; the adulteration of the produce of Hindustan, Maharashtra Desh and other patrias; the pollution and miscegenation of their peoples; the need for protection of antique religions, wisdoms and sciences; the need for husbanding of local resources, notably precious metals, artisans, women and cattle; and the importance of the survival of the remaining redoubts of legitimate Indian rule.

The tone of these critiques looked back to those of Ghulam Hussain, Raghavia and Ram Raz as much as it accorded with and informed the emerging discourse of national modernization. Thus the *Naiya Rajasthan* of 1868[60] complained about the oppressions still wreaked by passing British troops and referred to the old practice of 'taunting the sirkar' or jeering at the troops and officials as they passed through cities.

Newspapers referred to the increased abduction of women for immoral purposes in these days of degenerate government. Others pointed to the decline in the charity which had been an essential part of the operations of Indian kingship: formerly, great kings and *taluqdars* used to give blankets to the poor; now rich men raised subscriptions to erect statues to departing governors. Formerly, persons of respectability had been high in government; now persons of low caste and race had supplanted them. The British were said to be polluting the good humours of the land and people with drinking, cow killing and Christian conversion. Moreover, they were extracting resources by forcing rulers to pay homage to visiting members of the bureaucracy; they extracted silver from the Samber Salt Lake in Rajasthan by putting 'medicines' into it.[61] They levied uncustomary taxes on income. Artisans were thrown out of work (a cry which went back to the time of Ghulam Hussain) so that 'generally speaking, the work formerly done in Hindustan was done in England'. Ancient wisdom was disparaged and turned aside: 'Who will learn science when the want of food is the prevailing complaint'.

According to these publicists, kings who still ruled their states according to the rules of Kautilya or the 'Institutes of Akbar' were being edged aside by arrogant Residents so that 'the subjects of Hind look upon English rule as a sort of consumptive disease slowly progressing'.[62] The indigenous press in the older centres continued to spend an inordinate amount of paper on the travails of rulers such as Satara, Tonk, Hyderabad, Rampur and Baroda with British control. They also continued to look, as their predecessors of the 1830s had done to outside powers, noting with hope the signs of survival of the fight back of the Amir of Bokhara, the King of Afghanistan and the Shah of Persia.

Old patriotic traditions in all the main regions of India had, of course, already been affected by the impact of western education on a small number of Indian intellectuals and professional people. Institutions such as the Benares Sanskrit College, the Hindu College, Calcutta, and the Poona College had already introduced western concepts of race, nation and language into what were already hybrid forms. It was in these circles that new words for patriotism such as swadeshabhiman and *swadeshhitkari* were coined from their earlier cognate words *desh* and *deshmukh*. In Maharashtra as in Bengal, missionaries and small numbers of Indian intellectuals educated in these hybrid institutions began to publish the works of major poets and devotional teachers of the earlier age. In the 1860s and 1870s, for instance, the works of Tukaram and Ramdas were edited and published at Pune and Bombay.

Yet these were by no means pure inventions of regional sentiments.

Rather they represented the recoinage of traditions still current. The tradition of devotional hymnodists and the travelling balladeers still entranced audiences throughout western India. Those sections of Maratha and Brahmin territorial gentry which had survived the land settlements of the 1830s still met to contest government regulations and argue for the tradition of the country, as they did in the Deccan Association and the Kalyano Nyak Mandali of 1852.[63] More vigorous expressions of Maratha resistance were registered in the Satara revolt of 1848. Thus the radical student-run journals which established themselves in the 1870s at Pune and in the 1860s and 1870s at Satara, such as the *Shivaji* and the *Dnyan Prakash*, used the symbols of Maratha heroism to point to the ills of British rule. They did so in a context where the remembrance of the charity of Maratha kings and the piety of its devotional saints formed a real tradition.[64]

Typical of such traditions of political discourse in Hindustan was the *Oudh Akhbar* founded by Munshi Nawal Kishore in Lucknow in 1859. Trained by one of the earliest indigenous journalists of northern India, Munshi Harkishen Lal of Lahore, before the Rebellion, Munshi Nawal Kishore was typical of the gentry literati who had emerged out of the late Mughal Empire and the successor states.[65] His grandfather on his father's side had been treasurer of the Marathi commander-in-chief, while his grandfather on his mother's side had been a courtier of Emperor Shah Alam. His father had been a *zamindar* in Mathura district and the young Nawal Kishore had had a traditional education in the district and later attended the Agra College. The *Oudh Akhbar* published literary and historical works in the tradition of the satirical and social critical works of the eighteenth-century poets Mir Taki Mir and Sauda.

The newspaper also voiced covert criticism of British rule in Hindustan along the lines of old patriotism, but in the voice of unalloyed loyalism. In May 1868,[66] for instance, it printed an article consisting of questions and answers to Maulvi Muhammad Usman Khan of Rampur about British rule at a time when the colonial authorities were trying to intervene more vigorously in the affairs of this small princely state. The Maulvi was asked which was better, British or Hindustani rule, to which he categorically stated 'British rule', thus putting the censor's mind at rest, but he immediately added, 'yet the people are more happy under Hindoostanee rule'. Again, to assuage the censor he remarked that this was because the people were 'ignorant'. Yet, as his interrogation proceeded it became clear that the people had very good reason for their prejudices, ignorant or not. This was because the laws and customs of England were not suitable for Hindustan and those laws anyway were

changed too frequently. The unmindful government enforced too much uniformity; it imposed unfair taxes which were spent not on the welfare of the people, but outside the country in Abyssinia and Burma. Unfair confiscations had deprived children and holy men of their sustenance. Moreover, missionaries were active once again.[67]

As suggested earlier, strains already existed in regional patriotisms which reflected the greater salience of concepts of religious as opposed to territorial community both in the eighteenth century and under East India Company rule. This was why the appeal to Hindustan during 1857 looked back to the later Mughals as much as it pointed forward to Indian nationalism, as Rajat Ray argues.

In the post-Mutiny era, the strains in the concept became even clearer. From one perspective Sayyid Ahmad Khan was a typical old patriot imbued with a deep sense of Hindustan as an ancient royal realm, but one given life and meaning by the brilliance of its people and the 'traces' of great deeds. The upsurge of what he took to be Hindu–Muslim antipathy during the Rebellion, however, had the effect of nudging him from the idea of Hindustan as a common homeland of two great communities towards the idea of Hindustan as the living areas of two communities that had nothing in common but the land. Sayyid Ahmad's bruising encounter with Muslim scholars who deplored his eulogies of western knowledge and his desire to open the gates of interpretation of the Sayings of the Prophet also restricted his energies to debates with Muslims alone.

On the other hand, important elements of Sir Sayyid's position still reflected the common political discourse of Hindustan. In 1869 he was writing to his 'countrymen', the Hindustanis, as well as to his 'brethren', the Muslims, about their squalor and ignorance compared with the people he had seen in his travels in Europe. Moreover, he specifically addressed Hindustanis as opposed to Bengalis: 'I wrote for my countrymen not for those of Bengal',[68] he claimed. But in the matter of his lauding of western learning Sayyid Ahmad was more of the modernizer than the old patriot. Those who opposed or critiqued his views, such as Maulvi Muhammad Ali, Tahsildar of Mirzapore, often did so not from the point of view of purblind Islamic traditionalism, but from the perspective of the older tradition which already accepted the need to adjust the religious and secular learning of Hindustan to the findings of the Greeks. Spokesmen of this sort were as likely to argue that both Hindu and Muslim learning in Hindustan needed to arm itself and stand firm against the disparagement of Westerners and not capitulate to their disdain as Sir Sayyid Ahmad was doing.

This ambivalent position between loyalty to religious community and patria as a common inheritance of Hindustan was also a feature of the ideas of early Hindu publicists. Harischandra of Benares, to take the most significant, can be seen as an early Hindu nationalist, as Vasudha Dalmia does in her recent outstanding study of his circle.[69] In other respects, though, he was a typical inheritor of a version of old patriotism which was ambivalent about religious community. Harischandra was acutely aware of the inheritance of India's homelands, which he understood as much more than simple regions. He saw them as realms of historical contest and antique origin sanctified by gods, heroes, great kings and men of prayer. His works were shot through with a sense of Hindustan and, although he wrote of the tyrannies of Muslim rule, he also gave due credit to the great Muslim thinkers and poets. He wrote of Maharashtra, the Punjab and Rajasthan,[70] which he depicts as historical landscapes densely peopled by characters from Puranic legends, royal chronicles and devotional saints. His works arose out of a living tradition, rehearsed in the 'court' which he held at his house in Chaukhambha, Benares, where he entertained local historians, bards, poets and travelling praise singers.[71] He stood at the crossroads of numerous living traditions of local language and literature. The themes Harischandra harped on in his discussions of British rule were familiar:[72] the ignorance of the rulers, their failure to support Indian industries, the poverty of Hindustan compared with the lavishness of imperial *darbars*; the decline of ancient wisdoms. His concept of the modern state was weak; his understanding of religion was not of a textually based, revived Hinduism but of a kind of universalizing and incorporating version of Vaishnavite religion.

Like so many old patriots, Harischandra's reverence for land and people was compatible with public loyalty to the British Crown, which had him organizing and publishing Hindi and Sanskrit odes on the virtues of British Royalty. Vasudha Dalmia sees Harischandra's ideas, which were reflected in much of the political discourse of upper India at this time, as the first general articulation of 'communalism'. In my opinion the ideas of old patriotism had been commingled, in both major communities, with advocacy of religious community for more than two generations. The critical break came later in the propagation of political programmes which were exclusive to Hindus and Muslims respectively.

Taking the public debates of the first twenty years after 1857 in general terms, we can isolate three different types of discourse. First, there was a persistence of the old patriotic themes and political norms

we have been discussing. Second, we encounter rallying cries to particular religious communities. These continued to draw on Indian political ethics and were not yet unambiguously communal. Third, themes which derived directly from western ideologies were increasingly represented in the press and in pamphlets. The ideology of emergent nationalism was characterized by an emphasis on modern Indian industry, the international standing of India, statistical and political economic analysis, the need for modern scientific education, the skills of science, and the new professions. Modern nationalists were likely to be more hostile to the royal houses of old India, and contemptuous of caste sentiment and popular religion than those we have called old patriots.

Though these intellectual strands cannot simply be reduced to reflections of the interests of different social segments, westernizers tended to be drawn from groups which had been created by the post-1850 colonial economy or from within the institutions of English public instruction. Old patriots, or Indophiles as they can perhaps also be termed after 1860, were, by contrast, more likely to have been connected with old landed and administrative families. These families had themselves been preserved by the needs of the Company's military fiscal state at an earlier period. Nevertheless, they retained direct familial and cultural links with the centres of influence in pre-colonial India. By the 1880s the debate between westernizer and Indophile had begun within the debate between colonizer and colonized.

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4

Patriotism and Nationalism

This chapter reconsiders the emergence of Indian nationalism in the context of the longer history of politics and anti-colonial resistance in the subcontinent. In the 1950s most foreign historians of India and many Indians dismissed the notion that 1857 had been the first war of independence and a forerunner of mass nationalism. The complicity of Indian nationalism with the forms of the European state, the modernizing credentials of the Congress leadership and its Victorian political organization created, it was said, a sharp break with the traditional revolts and ideologies of government of the earlier era.

Yet, we may still be able to see some links, analogies and continuities between old patriotisms and later forms of nationalist thought and action. At the popular level, for example, regional movements which were associated with the independence struggle voiced some of the doctrines and made use of some of the organizations which were typical of those political forms discussed in earlier chapters. The cow-protection movements of the 1880s and 1890s, which were ambiguously linked to some Congress leaders, voiced fears of the desolation of the land and the slaughter of its most priceless possession, Mother Cow. Many groups, from the Sikh Akalis to the Bengal revolutionaries of the 1900s, asserted that Europeans brought pollution and drained the virtue of Mother India. Mahatma Gandhi himself was pre-eminently a humoural thinker, conjoining the notions of public and private virtue, of body and belief in a way typical of earlier patriotisms.

The very ideas of 'Hindustan' and 'Bharat' which were popularly used in nationalist discourse in preference to the learned 'India', summon up the fluctuating geographic boundaries of the old patriotisms. Even the Indian national anthem, using the words of a poem by Tagore, conjures up a virtuous set of patrias linked into a wider national community. It is clear, too, that the theory of the 'drain of wealth' elaborated by the Bombay nationalists in the 1890s was a learned version of notions

which had been in popular currency throughout the colonial period and probably before. Finally, those rapid communications by letter and rumour which characterized the movement of political discourse in earlier periods continued during the independence struggle.

The early national movement in India was given strength and depth by these old patriotisms and by the political theory of the old Indian polity. It was never simply a talking-shop for lawyers and English speakers. Equally, the Indian National Congress was galvanized by a new collision with revived British nationalism and imperialism which was brilliantly announced by Benjamin Disraeli in the 1870s and consolidated by the mass male franchise.

Old patriotisms, and more recently, nationalisms, have long been making and remaking each other within the context of the British Empire. The shadow of these patriotisms is still with us and still reverberating within the old imperial space. Irish republicans seek solace in the former thirteen colonies of the old British Empire; northern loyalists do the same in Canada and New Zealand. Both in turn stir to life a sense of English identity, the ruling sentiment of a once and future kingdom. Looking east, the BBC serves as a two way mirror through which old Indian patriotisms, in their regional and confessional varieties collide with English sensibilities. It was, after all, a BBC film of Sikhs in Bradford distributing sweets to celebrate the assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 that sparked off the anti-Sikh massacres of that fateful year.

The honour of holy men, warriors, and women, the rape of the land and the corruption of office and royalty—these are all themes which would have been entirely comprehensible to Raghavia and Abu Talib two hundred years ago. They still evoke echoes in the British Isles and south Asia, where regional patriotisms are tugging at the constraints of mass nationalism. Many of the current culture wars in multi-cultural Britain and America seem more comprehensible if we abandon the notion that they represent the struggle of a religious East against a rational West, and see them instead as conflicts over the virtue of different concepts of patriotism which have been disseminated yet more widely by global migration and mass communication.

'Proto-nationalism' and Nationalism in Theory

In discussing the organization and ideology of early nationalism in India, it is useful to return to some of the theoretical writers. Ronald Grigor Suny's[1] analysis of the regional nationalism of the former USSR distances itself from the notion that old ties of nationality and ethnic

identities contribute in any significant way to modern, constructed nationalism. He contrasts the 'Sleeping Beauty' model where the modern state awakens these ancient entities with the kiss of modernity to the 'Bride of Frankenstein' model in which a random jumble of limbs is constructed by the powerful alchemy of the modern state. According to Suny, the nationalism of the Ukraine or Kazakhstan owes little to the proto-nationalisms of earlier centuries and everything to the educational, language and ethnic policies of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, especially after 1950. What Suny is arguing for here is an extreme form of the argument that nationalism is a 'derivative discourse' constructed by the organs of a nation-state. This is a position which has found many supporters among Third World intellectuals in recent years.

Yet Suny's radical position is the reflection of a special case. Among the theorists of nationalism, Eric Hobsbawm[2] is perhaps the most generally informed historically. Along with most others he also unambiguously insists on the 'modernity' of nationalism which he sees passing everywhere from a liberal and elite phase to a phase of mass mobilization in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The essential feature of this 'modern nationalism' is that it insists that obligations to the nation-state override all other forms of obligation. 'This implication distinguishes modern nationalism from other and less demanding forms of national or group identification.'[3] The key feature of such nationalism, according to Hobsbawm, is the congruence of an ethnic group which ideally speaks a common language, with a definite and delimited territory. The motor of the development of the nation is the creation of a centralized state and a national economy.

In this analysis, the state precedes the nation, rather than the other way round. The latter position is a myth propagated by nationalist leaders. Indeed, the apparent homogeneity of the nation is largely the creation of the pre-existing state which, through programmes such as primary education, and the fostering of common religious norms and building of centralized armed forces, powerfully aids the processes of integration.

Even in Hobsbawm's work, however, there is a ghost at the feast of modernity. Phrases of his such as 'modern nationalism' seem to point to the possibility of other forms of nationalism. They evince an uneasiness which almost all theorists share about what might have preceded nationalism and what popularized it or 'rooted it' in our phrase. Hobsbawm had already confronted this problem in *The Invention of Tradition* where 'invented traditions', most of which are seen as effects of the

modern state, are apparently opposed to 'custom'. According to this argument, custom in more traditional societies is an active social entity, responding to social change and in turn creating it. Invented tradition is, by ironic contrast, an immutable, ageless and unchangeable point of reference for societies in the process of very disruptive change.

Yet even here, Hobsbawm the historian intervenes to create another term in the argument. This comprises what he calls 'old traditions'.[4] Apparently, these are not invented in the same way as the other 'invented traditions'. In his argument this category of ideology seems to form a connection between custom and invented tradition in the same way that what he calls 'less demanding forms of group or national identification' stand between community and 'modern nationalism' in his *Nations and Nationalism*.

Hobsbawm deals head on with the issue in *Nations and Nationalism* in the chapter entitled 'Popular Proto-nationalism'.[5] What he discussed here bears a resemblance to what we have called old patriotism, a term which seems preferable because it does not bear the weight of teleology inherent in the suffix 'proto-'. The notion of Russian-ness, for example, Hobsbawm believes, was formed around a sense of identification with 'holy icons, the faith, the Tsar, the state'. One could add here a sense of the charisma of the Russian heartland and of a constant threat from outsiders, particularly Tartars and Muslims.

Hobsbawm concedes that some sense of language community may even have been present in the earlier stage of nationality formation. For, a little later, he notes that while, in the absence of a system of formal education, there could have been no mass linguistic uniformity, loose linguae francae might have come into being before the extension of public instruction. These had been fostered by 'preachers, the reciters of songs and poems common to a wider cultural area'. All this adds up to a disavowal that the 'modern nationalism' of the late nineteenth century could have come into existence simply through the actions of bureaucratic elites in a void inventing a national tradition with no meaning or resonance in the wider society. Modern nationalism, to return to Suny's metaphor, despite its Frankenstein-like aspect, was made up of relatively recently living tissue and to a pattern that bore some resemblance to the ideal of the pre-existing Sleeping Beauty.

There are several reasons for believing that the links between modern nationalism and old patriotisms were even closer in colonized agrarian societies such as India. For one thing, late colonial governments, unlike national governments, were deeply ambivalent about

promoting cultural and economic unities which might challenge their control. In the Indian case, the British created a national market to a certain extent and contributed to the standardization of languages. But they more strenuously emphasized the fragment: the caste, the regional or religious community and the rustic dialect. What passed for the modern state in India was, therefore, less determined in its elimination of older forms of social authority and less centralizing in its social policy than contemporary European states. In this situation, political theories and popular ideologies with direct links to the pre-colonial or early-colonial past retained relevance and legitimacy.

The first generation of nationalists had to operate in the same terrain. The very fact that the centres of political power were colonized by foreigners meant that they were forced willy-nilly to adopt a more decentralized strategy of political mobilization. They were forced to use traditional forms of discourse and debate. Nationalists focused on hallowed locales and had to appeal to existing communities of speech and sentiment. Moreover, because of the limited degree of social and economic transformation under colonial rule and its tendency to 'freeze' social relations and even mentalities, many nationalist leaders were themselves no more than a generation distant from the traditions of scribal and priestly learning which had animated the intelligentsia of the earlier Indian polities.

Old patriotisms, therefore, provided powerful, though two-edged weapons for nationalist leaders. Nationalist leaders were constrained to summon up those 'less demanding forms of national or group identification' which Hobsbawm mentions. In India this rubric covered religious institutions such as pilgrimage networks, sufi hospices, temples, caste organizations, the connections of older court centres, marriage patterns, and the networks of indigenous traders and merchants. It was not simply a matter of communication, however. Nationalist programmes could also be powerfully supported and in some cases moulded by the active sentiment of regional patriotism and by the routines of the political comment and ideas of ethical government which underlay them.

While it is important to avoid reifying and romanticizing such sentiments and organizations into an 'authentic' indigenous voice, it is impossible to study Indian nationalism without taking account of them. An analogy can perhaps be found in colonial Africa where Terence Ranger notes that African nationalists who rejected European-imported national traditions sometimes did no more than validate an African

customary sphere which was as firmly 'invented' as the European one. Yet Ranger himself also leaves room for a third outcome. According to him, African leaders '*have* sometimes been able to tap the continued vitality of the mingled continuity and innovation which resides within indigenous cultures as they have continued to develop underneath the rigidities of codified colonial custom'.[6]

Indian polemicists on the subject of nationalism have sometimes made some concessions to this possibility. Partha Chatterjee's *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse?* (London, 1986) left little room for any kind of indigenous 'proto-nationalism'. It argued strenuously for the total appropriation of the Indian nationalist leadership by the discourse of power of the western nation-state. In this he found himself in agreement with Ashis Nandy, who came from a position in the centre of Indian politics. Nandy set himself against 'enlightenment' European paradigms in Indian politics and argued that the modern state was inappropriate to south Asian societies which were not homogeneous and had little basis for common norms of citizenship, rights and duties, but were more in the nature of nestling agglomerations of little communities of shared cultural norms.[7]

Later, though, Chatterjee seems to have realized that insistence on the discursive steamroller of the western nation-state in Indian history made it impossible to say why the pattern of the Indian past differed from that of anywhere else. It proved impossible to explain why events such as the demolition of the mosque at Ajodhya took place, or why Hindu and Muslim parties existed. His *The Nation and Its Fragments*[8] attempted to deal with this problem by reinserting 'religion' and the 'domestic sphere' as pristine redoubts from which Indians could fight back against the colonial state and westernization. As several critics have pointed out, it is difficult to maintain that the domestic sphere and religion were any more or less affected by colonialism and modernity than any other realm of Indian life. All were to some degree hybrid. More seriously, it appears from this argument that Indians are different from other peoples in the world mainly in so far as they have particular domestic and religious forms, a position which James Mill would have perfectly approved.

One writer who has advanced an interesting approach to issues of tradition and modernity is Peter van der Veer.[9] In his *Religious Nationalism* he challenges the dominant view that nationalism 'belong[s] squarely on the "modern" side of the "great divide" between "tradition and modernity" '.[10] He emphasizes, as the previous chapters in this

book have done, the importance of locations and modes of thought drawn from the Indian past in informing understandings of the nation even to the present period of Hindu 'fundamentalism' and the destruction of Babur's mosque at the pilgrimage city of Ajodhya in 1992.

Van der Veer draws particular attention to the role of Sufism in the expansion of Islam in India and to pilgrimage and the generalization of ritual ideas in Hindu India. He states:

> If we accept the view that India has its own historical development which is contemporary to that of the West but occupies a different geographical space, we have to look for some long term patterns which may help us to account for the specific characteristics of Indian nationalism.[11]

Van der Veer also stresses the inwardness of nationality formation through social agency rather than the projects of the state, which are so heavily emphasized by Gellner and Hobsbawm, in particular. While challenging the simplistic notions of pre-colonial syncretism among different religions in India, he also insists that pre-colonial India was neither syncretic nor communal, and that these very concepts were products of the discourse of modernity.

Though van der Veer heroically fights the tendency to essentialize the categories Hindu and Muslim, he finds it difficult to avoid them himself. He speaks of 'Islamic expansion'[12] and the 'development of Hinduism', and these seem to take over from the colonial state as master-narratives of the process of the formation of 'religious nationalism' in his work. Despite his desire to counter this assumption, it does seem that this religious nationalism is more characteristic of Asia than the secular nationalism of Europe. This merely reinserts the dichotomy between modernity and tradition in a different way.

Van der Veer's formulation deserves some sympathy. Modern nationalism in south Asia is heavily impregnated with religion, more so than in many parts of the West. Secular parties of the right have not flourished. Even left parties have had to make periodic obeisance to religion and national culture both before and after Independence. All the same, it is important to contest the notion that this was a natural growth from roots of nationality that were essentially religious. To say that religious ideas impregnated and legitimized political ideas is not to say that political ideas were no more than the epiphenomena of religion.

Van der Veer's interpretation would have been more successful if he had paid more attention to politics. He needed to bring in concepts of just rule and equity which transcended the very real but subtle boundaries among communities and were embodied in institutions of consensus

making and routines of political critique. His argument would also have benefited from a fuller discussion of what is called regionalism but would be better expressed as the old patriotism of the homelands, a tradition which generally embraced locally resident communities of other religions, but did not assimilate them. A formulation of this sort would have avoided the teleological feel of his argument. Forms of modern nationalism were not preordained by the past. Secularism may be a modern concept but its ideologies could set up resonances with some of these older themes and institutions, just as exclusive religious themes could. It all depended on leadership and context.

Lineages of Indian Nationalism

The argument that the practice and discourse of Indian nationalism was derived from western models and exemplars is quite persuasive as far as the formal statements of Congress leaders and their public political programmes since 1885 are concerned. Appeals to Indian tradition, to the national past, at this level were indeed almost wholly 'invented' in the sense that they summon up the nation as a static, timeless ideal more or less equivalent to other national entities, inflected by little that is specifically Indian. In this discourse heroic resisters of old such as the Rani of Jhansi could be substituted for Anna Garibaldi, and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and the Bengali language for Manzoni and the Italian language. Giuseppe Mazzini transmutes into Vinayak Savarkar with little change. The form of nation being sought was the big centralized power or, in the early days of Indian nationalism, the model of the independent Dominion within the British Empire.

Let us, however, ask a different set of questions: How did this derivative concept of nation and nationalism become rooted in the institutions of the Indian environment and understood in terms of its own ethical and political ideas? Why did the concept of the Indian nation come to command such considerable support so quickly in a society which was, if not illiterate, at best only literacy aware? How did vernacular elites and ordinary people understand the role of their regions and communities within this wider national aspiration? Why, even today, does the Indian sense of nationality differ in important respects from other 'derived' and 'constructed' nationalisms whether in Ireland, Italy or Serbia?

If these questions are asked, then our attention is not directed so much to formal nationalist structures and utterances but to the emotional, ideological and institutional context within which nationalist ideas gained currency, value and weight. Such a hermeneutic approach

to nationalist discourse would focus on what Eric Hobsbawm calls the 'old traditions' and 'customary practices' of nineteenth-century India. Pre-eminent as an agent that rooted nationalism, and in the other contexts contested, moulded and even rejected it, is the set of ideas and practices grouped under the concept of old patriotism. The following sections take a number of examples from different parts of India to demonstrate how formal Congress and other national political organizations were epistemologically and socially rooted in these inheritances.

One of the earliest and most celebrated oppositional political associations which worked for the amelioration of the condition of colonial Indians and later contributed to the regional Congress movement was the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha (Pune People's Service Society).[13] Founded in 1872 in the former capital of the Maratha Peshwas, the association played an important role in criticizing the revenue and famine policies of the Government of Bombay. It organized self-help associations to try to tackle the severe famine of 1876. It presented reports which challenged the equity of Bombay settlement reports, and its programmes on debt relief were thought by officials to have contributed to the riots against Marwari moneylenders in 1874, causing several British officials to brand the Sabha 'seditious'. It was closely associated with the first generation of radical newspapers in upland western India, notably the *Dnyan Prakash* and the *Indu Prakash*. Many of its protagonists were young graduates of Bombay University and the Deccan College of Brahmin or writer caste background. In its early days it was associated with Justice M.G. Ranade, a key figure in the historical reinvention of the tradition of Maratha greatness who is mentioned in Chapter 1.

Formally, the constitution and ideology of the Sabha were derivatives of western models in that the Sabha aimed to represent the people of Pune on an elective basis, its rules were drawn up in the lawyerly verbiage of the English common law, and its activities were those of the British pressure group modelled on the campaigns of the English anti-Corn Law League or earlier anti-slavery movements.

If we look deeper, however, and consider the context of ideas and practices from which it evolved traditions drawn from the Maratha Desh seem more important. In the first place, the issues which the society took up initially had powerful resonances in old Maratha patriotism. The Sabha was constituted as an attempt to reform the management of the Parvati temple at Pune, which was alleged to be corrupt and ineffective.[14] The Parvati temple was one of the most important of the shrines

in western India because it contained the memorials (*samadhis*) of several of the Maratha Peshwas who had opposed the Mughals, Afghans and the British. It was from the Parvati hill that the Peshwa had watched the fateful attack on the British Residency in 1817 which signalled the end of Maratha independence. The temple attracted veneration from all the high-caste communities of Pune city and was itself a memorial to the attempts by the Peshwas to project their realm as a 'Brahmin Sarkar', or state devoted to the service of the divine principle. At a later stage in its career, the Sabha was actively involved in the attempt to reform the workings of the system of *dakshina*, originally pious donations by the Peshwas to holy men and Brahmins in the city.

Moreover, the constitution of the Sabha also included elements which incorporated Indo-Islamic, and not simply western, ideas of representation. Members were invested with the power of attorney (*mukhteanamah*) by bodies of male citizens organized on the basis of the quarters of the old town.[15] The power of attorney was, of course, a concept within English common law but it also derived from indigenous ideas of *vakalat*, or advocacy. From one perspective, the Sabha was constituted as a kind of general assembly or panchayat. As we saw in Chapter 1, the capacity of western Indians to create political consensus through panchayats was something which both they and the later British rulers came to see as a special inheritance of Peninsular India. In the Sabha, moreover, representatives of the old territorial leaders of the Maratha confederation were enlisted (to the Government's alarm) in order to give it a social weight which could not be conferred on it by the activities of English-educated lawyers.

The Sabha and other political activities in the Desh during the 1870s were constituted against the background of a movement to value and promote local produce—a swadeshi movement, which owed little as yet to the English Arts and Crafts movement and relatively little to the economic nationalism of Bombay. This movement arose in response to the rapid decline of the local industries that had once been supported by the Peshwas, the Rajas of Satara and the territorial aristocracy but which had been in crisis for a generation following the decline of these patrons, the impact of British imports and the prevailing drought conditions in the Deccan.

Justice Ranade and other political reformers drew on a deep sentiment of local autarchy when they began in the early 1870s to lecture on the need to protect local artisans. As one contemporary wrote, Ranade

generated 'an outburst of national sentiment . . . these lectures were delivered in Marathi and could therefore be understood by the common people, the artisans and the traders whose sympathies they naturally evoked'.[16]

Jim Masselos, who has written the most detailed study of these early Deccan associations, similarly notes that 'the key elements [in Ranade's appeal] were patriotism and sympathy for those deprived of their livelihood',[17] just as the same sentiments affected the elites in their horrified reactions to the suffering of the Deccan peasant during the scarcities. This was a society in which the distance between Maratha aristocrat, Maratha Brahmin and the Kanbi peasant or local artisan had been much less great than class differences in some other parts of the subcontinent.

Masselos's analysis is very much to the point, but, writing in the 1970s when nationalist movements were thought to basically represent the desire of mobilized national bourgeoisies for modern industry, he was constrained to describe these early swadeshi movements with their hostility to the outside world as 'Luddite'.[18] In fact, they represented a popular notion of moral economy or, more precisely, a popular understanding of the old principles of statecraft in the Maratha lands which had been articulated in the 'Ajnapatra' of the early eighteenth century.

Now it is true that fissures had already opened within this inclusive regional culture. Certain themes in the inheritance of western Indian politics, notably the attitude of the hero king Shivaji to the Muslims, were interpreted in a divisive fashion. Equally, the later Peshwas' 'Brahminization' was represented by the reformist Jyoti Rao Phule and the first generation of non-Brahmin leaders as a deviation from the proper traditions of Maharashtra Dharma, the spiritual way of Maharashtra.[19] Nevertheless, these divisions were still of secondary importance until widened by the electoral and communal politics of the 1890s. Several of the early Deccan political associations, including the Sarvajanik Sabha, argued for proper representation for local Muslims. Much of the language of politics was still derived from Persianized Marathi. During the economic crises of the 1860s and 1870s, moreover, the need for Brahmins and non-Brahmins to unite against the pressures of climate and foreign rule prevailed over the ideology of non-Brahminism.

The more radical form of nationalism promoted in western India by Bal Gangadhar Tilak after 1890 looks, at first sight, like a clear example of 'invented tradition'. The iconography of Shivaji, slayer of the Muslim, and by extension the British invader, had displayed little direct continuity with the political discourse of the 'Ajnapatra' which still had

some resonances in Satara, home state of Shivaji's lineage, as late as in the 1840s and 1850s. The concept of 'Full Independence' (*purna swaraj*) which Tilak and his supporters promoted was the nationalism of the modern nation-state and had been heavily influenced by the experience of the 'White Dominions' of the British Empire and Ireland. The themes of self-strengthening and righteous violence in the national cause propagated by swadeshi newspapers were top-dressed with traditional ideas of power (*shakti*), but derived more obviously from current notions of eugenics and race theory coming from western European sources.

Yet, if we ask a hermeneutic question—what did these themes mean to the people outside the circles of the western educated elites?—a different set of issues arises. For instance, the Maharashtrian 'extremist' leaders, like those of Bengal, made considerable efforts to associate their radical politics with the continuing tradition of popular pilgrimages, festivals and heroic ballad singing. They also sited their political meetings and political cells at places which easily evoked the memory of a pious and glorious past. The festivals in honour of the god Ganpati, politicized by Tilak, capitalized on a substantial expansion over the nineteenth century of the cult of the elephant-headed deity. It was a cult for all Marathas and one associated with the homeland's traditions of martial virtues.[20]

British officials and publicists, such as Valentine Chirol who wrote for the London *Times*, tended to see 'extremism' as a violent reaction by the 'ancient orient' of caste, Brahmin values and religious bigotry.[21] Rejecting this argument, however, should not lead historians to ignore the specificities of the culture in which modern nationalism embedded itself. For example, the holy city of Nasik, where Captain Kennedy, the district magistrate, was assassinated in 1907 did, of course, have an unusually high percentage of educated young men among whom modern nationalist ideas had spread. But Chirol was right to stress that this was a city in which 9000 out of the 25,000 population were Deshasta and Chitpavan Brahmins serving the hundreds of temples and bathing places. As he writes: 'Nasik was, moreover, a city beloved of the Peshwas, and next to Poona preserves, perhaps, more intimate associations with the great days of the Mahratta Empire than any other city of the Deccan.'[22] Swadeshi and swaraj evoked here traditions of patriotic resistance. These, moreover, were old traditions, not merely invented ones, in the sense that the collective memory of institutions and families provided a direct link with the Maratha past. They were also formative

influences on the westernized version of regional nationalism and not simply subordinated by it.

Such locales of memory associated with a past of resistance attracted radical nationalists in other parts of India. In Allahabad between 1905 and 1910, for instance, a superficial survey of the 'extremist' movement would suggest that its supporters were deracinated students or politicians unable to break into the charmed circles of the suave 'moderates' such as Motilal Nehru and expatriate Bengalis who dominated the Allahabad High Court Bar. But there was more to it than that. Extremist political lecturers attracted crowds and support in those parts of the city where modern influences had tended to preserve earlier traditions.[23] The settlement of Daraganj was the seat of the Allahabad bathing and genealogical priests (the Pragwals) and martial monasteries (*akharas*) of the Shaivite and Vaishnavite 'renouncer' sects. Both these groups had a long tradition of asserting the independence of the secular authorities based at Allahabad. This derived from the idea that the great Hindu gods should be sovereign at their places of worship as well as from the tradition of arms-bearing and free movement across north India. Daraganj had been a centre of resistance to the British in 1857.

Nor were the local old traditions in which nationalism rooted itself purely 'Hindu' or 'religious'. One of the major sufi shrines of the city, Djara Shah Ajmal, also provided a venue for political mobilization in 1907, and its leading *Pir*, Shah Fakhruddin, made speeches in praise of swadeshi both in 1907 and during the first non-cooperation movement of 1919–21.[24] This Sufi shrine was notably more liberal in religious practice than shrines which already supported the Muslim League in 1907. It belonged to the Chishti Nizami, an order which permitted music and dancing during oblations to deceased saints and attracted many Hindus to its gates. It, too, had been a centre of resistance in 1857. From 1860 to the 1930s, its teachers continued to promote an ethical and political message which stressed justice, good government and the promotion of local produce (many master-weavers had been amongst its devotees). This was a message which resonated with both the cognate political and ethical traditions (akhlaq and *rajdharma*).

During the major upsurges of political activity in Allahabad and other north Indian cities between 1880 and 1930, all the major elements of traditional political activity—a patriotic sense of land and people, doctrines of right conduct and government, and the ecumenical network of forms of political communication and debate—were actively engaged against the political authorities. They underpinned and lent meaning to

western-derived theories and practices of nationalism. In doing so, they both responded to them and moulded their form.

Patriotism and Community

As we have seen, their convergence with old patriotic traditions makes the rapid spread and social rooting of Indian nationalist ideologies and assumptions more readily explicable. Ironically, however, that is also true of the so-called communal organizations and ideologies of the late nineteenth century, including the precursors of the Muslim League and the various Hindu associations which grew up throughout India. Taking the Muslim tradition first, it is evident that historians and theorists have still not found an adequate way of describing it and accounting for its persistence.

There is no doubt, of course, that organizations such as the Urdu Defence Association, the Mahommedan Educational Conference and the Muslim League itself pre-eminently voiced the sectional interests of the embattled Muslim gentry of north Indian cities and small *qasbah* towns. But that is not all they did. In particular, it is impossible to explain why so many ordinary people, not of that class, identified with and cherished institutions such as the Aligarh College and the Deoband Madrassah if this political tradition is seen simply as a vehicle for vested interests, even one in which Islamic symbols were manipulated by elites. Authors who once held this view, such as Francis Robinson and Paul Brass,[25] seem to have reconsidered their opinions in this respect. Both now accept the importance of religion and ideology in informing the sense of difference which logically must have underlain the demands for separate political representation and employment quotas for Muslims.

Similarly, the Marxist left of Indian historiography shows signs of revising its opinion that Hindu and Muslim communalism was simply a ploy of feudals or of the divisive British government to split a naturally homogeneous nationalist movement. Gyanendra Pandey, for instance, has argued that rural Hindu people valued the cow as a symbol of community; Muslims came to view cow killing as a badge of respectability and piety. From this perspective, it is unhelpful to dismiss these clashing sentiments as bigotry, even though their consequences in communal rioting and murder cannot be condoned in any history.

Relatively few historians outside the narrow circles of the Pakistani academy have bothered to analyze the ideology of the early Muslim separatist movement. One of the few who has is Farzana Shaikh.[26] She

has argued that any solidly grounded explanation of Muslim separatist politics in India must take account of ideas rooted in 'Islamic tradition'. In particular, she interprets the clash of aims between modernizers of the Indian National Congress and Muslim leaders from Sayyid Ahmad Khan to Muhammad Iqbal as one between a notion of political representation stressing majoritarian democracy and one which rested on ideas which emphasized the need for wise and godly men to reach a consensus in conclave. Traditional ideas in Arabic political thought, such as *anjuman* (gathering), *shura* (the practice of consultation in Muslim polity) and *ijma* (the consensus of the learned men of the community), were quite incompatible with European liberal notions of majority voting, she argues. The Muslim leadership largely rejected the Congress's demand for electorates and competitive examinations not because they were against their material interests, but because they stood contrary to Muslim political teachings.[27]

Farzana Shaikh's attempt to reinsert political theory into the history of Indian Muslim political action is of importance and deserves wider discussion. But it requires some development and some qualification. First, the actual content and context of Hindu–Muslim local politics in the late nineteenth century needs to be addressed. Local politics saw theory and sensibility at work; it was not simply a matter of material gains. This was the context out of which developed broader communitarian traditions in both the Hindu and Muslim idiom. Emerging conflicts between Hindu and Muslim representatives on municipal councils and district boards were arguably more important in the development of communal politics than communal riots, which have been accorded so much importance by historians. The latter were not new, were often quickly forgotten and did not necessarily signal the enmity of rigidly defined communities. Local political disputes, however, were more significant precisely because they embodied matters of political principle as well as material interests.

One cause of friction, for instance, centred on the location of tanneries and butchers' shambles in cities where municipal authority had been devolved to committees of Indians.[28] These were, of course, issues of religious symbolism. In addition, however, they were matters where there were significant variations between the two complementary traditions of political ethics. Hindus regarded these occupations as not merely low but polluting, outside society. In the akhlaq tradition, which closely resembled the Hindu one but did not overlap with it, these were low trades but useful ones which should be accorded space within the city.

Graveyards and Sufi hospices similarly became the subject of fierce communal disputes when Hindu-dominated municipal councils attempted to interfere with them, tax them or encroach on their land. But this was an emotive issue because such traces of historic spirituality and greatness were important markers of old patriotism in the Indo-Muslim tradition. As we have seen, the treaties of cession of the early nineteenth century when Indian rulers gave up their lands to the East India Company specifically bound the new rulers to respect these holy places which were conduits of the charisma of the land.

Issues about the nomination by officials of Muslim gentlemen to municipal councils and district boards often antagonized Congress leaders because it seemed to them that the British were packing these bodies with feudals. If, however, we examine who were the men the Muslims wished to have nominated, we find that they were men of ancient virtuous (*ashraf*) lineage, descendants of learned and holy men who embodied the charisma (*barkat*) of a particularly Indian variety of Islam.

The wider issue that emerges from this is that what has often been condemned as communalism was powerful not simply because it was rooted in the self-interest of elites, let alone religious bigotry. It was powerful because it represented a version of old patriotism and Indian political ethics, but one which differed in significant respects from its homology within an emerging Hindu 'community'.

It is important to recognize that the communitarian movements of the late nineteenth century drew on a similar inheritance of patriotic themes in which different cultural traditions had melded but not entirely fused. It would be better to argue that Sayyid Ahmad Khan and his comperes were not so much 'rooted in Islamic tradition' (*pace* Farzana Shaikh), as in an Indo-Muslim version of a regional patriotic tradition, but one whose fissures were increasingly exposed by the modern discourse of representation.

The previous chapter pointed to the ambivalence of Indian Muslim discourse in the aftermath of the Rebellion. That theme can now be developed a little further. Sayyid Ahmad's own position remained fluid even after the foundation of the Congress. In his *Causes of the Indian Revolt*,[29] published a few years after the Rebellion, Sayyid Ahmad emphasized the old patriotic themes of 'bad counsel', the decay of indigenous knowledges, illegitimate taxation and lack of access to the ruler. He argued for the creation of bodies of respectable Indians to advise the rulers, drawing heavily on the ideas of the 'Akhlaq-i Jalali'. Throughout he had written of Indian habits and customs (*Hindustani adab wa dastar*).

When denouncing bad counsel, it was more often the Bengali *babu* from outside the core of Hindustan than Hindus as a group who was the butt of his ire.

In other speeches and writings Sayyid Ahmad slipped almost unconsciously between upbraiding and encouraging his 'Muslim brothers' and his 'countrymen' more widely. In his speech to the Calcutta Literary Society published in 1863,[30] he lectured on 'patriotism and the necessity of promoting knowledge in India'. Patriotism is here *wataniyat* and India *Hindustan*. Wataniyat is a word homologous with the Hindi *swadesh bhakti* which, while originating as a description of a landed holding or 'home fief', had been invested with a stronger sentimental meaning. He slips between urging Indians in general, Hindustanis in particular and the Muslim 'race' (*qaum*) to reform itself. Moreover, while many learned Muslims disagreed with him, he argued that the infusion of western knowledge into Hindustani lore would strengthen it just as the infusion of Greek knowledge was a creative influence in the development of Indo-Islamic political thought, ethics and metaphysics.

This inheritance of a more general Hindustani political discourse was evident even in the statements of more obviously 'separatist' organizations of the later period. The Urdu Defence Association, for instance, drew on some support from the Hindu clerical families, mainly Khattris and Kayasthas, who had long been literate in Persian and Urdu.[31] Its claim was partly that Urdu (using the Prophet's script) was a religious symbol for Indian Muslims. More centrally it claimed, however, that Urdu was the language of Hindustan in which the greatest writers and thinkers, both Hindu and Muslim, had done their work. Hindi in the Devanagari script was, by contrast, a new concoction, influenced by Bengali. Even the Muslim League, which spoke continually as representative of Indian Muslims, slipped sometimes into describing the decay of the elite of Hindustan and prescribing a return to the communal harmony which had existed under the Mughals. When Muslim leaders came to denounce the 'extremist' political movement in the Congress that surfaced after Curzon's partition of Bengal in 1905, it was because the radical leaders denounced Muslim kings, reminding the other community that Hindus too had served Akbar and Jahangir.

In sum, one of the sources of strength in what on the surface was a communitarian, or even communal, discourse was that its rhetoric drew on old patriotism. Its sense of place was rooted in the charisma of the Indian homeland and its methods of communication—through poetry,

Sufi connections and mosques as well as the press—drew on the traditions of communication of the Indian ecumene.

Ironically, of course, much the same can be said of the so-called Hindu communal organizations which emerged during the same period. I say 'so-called' because the language of these early societies and organizations in the Hindu interest is not communal in the sense that the later rhetoric of the Hindu right, of the RSS and V.D. Savarkar, became. There is no talk of a Hindu nation, or of the essential moral and biological superiority of Hindus to Muslims. The modern state seems distant from the preoccupation of these Hindu revivalists. Again, the locus of their discourse were ancient places of spirituality and remembered greatness, but ones which had a continuous history of importance, not simply invented traditions. Like the Maratha kings of the previous century, the aim was not so much to confront a Muslim 'community', but to ensure the sovereignty of the Hindu gods on their places of sacrifice and salvation in the interest of the wider patria.

Thus the Madhya Hindu Samaj of 1880 was concerned above all to make pilgrimage at the holy places of Prayag (Allahabad) seemly, and to do so the Muslim kotwal had to be replaced by a Hindu police chief who would understand the sensitivities of the pilgrims. So, again, as Katherine Prior shows,[32] the societies agitating against government intervention in the running of pilgrim hostels (*dharmashalas*) were doing so not because they were obscurantist religious bigots but because charitable and holy acts such as these had always been shielded from the intervention of the state in Indo-Muslim government.

The same argument can be applied in analyzing that most contentious of issues, cow killing. The argument for cow protection was, of course, religiously based. Yet the protection of cattle also accorded with old patriotic notions of protecting the wealth and produce of the land against rapine and looting. It was part of the wider valuation of local economic autarchy which encouraged the swadeshi movement and saw political leaders well before the turn of the twentieth century preaching the virtues of local produce and deprecating the influx of foreign goods.

It is, of course, true that cow protection was seen by some Muslims (though not all, as Pandey[33] shows) as a form of Hindu triumphalism. But the contention of this chapter is that the ideological and social power of communitarian politics in India arose precisely from the fact that it was predicated on the basis of sentiments of attachment and political norms which had been homologous and complementary as among

Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and even Indian Christians. A similar point can be made, for example, about religious politics in Northern Ireland. As in India, this had been a composite landscape of Protestant and Catholic patriotism in which Protestant resistance to the British state had been as powerful as the Catholic. To the same degree, the strength of communitarianism and communal politics in Ireland was generated precisely from the transparency of the political and ritual language. Everyone knew, and knows, the meaning of marching, the symbolism of the routes taken, the sacred places of national legend. Consequently, when homology turns to antipathy, the conflict is irremediable.

The Past and Nationalist Ideologies

Even if we look at the high peaks of the nationalist political ideology we can see several different ways in which the older political traditions were creatively enlisted. In some cases there was a simple co-option of cultural trappings to garnish a drive for power in a bourgeois national state, but this was not universally so.

Sri Aurobindo—Aurobindo Ghosh—identified himself with what I have called the Indian tradition of political ethics. Writing of the foundations of Indian culture in the journal *Arya* between 1918 and 1921, he denounced 'the lifeless attempt of the last generation to imitate and reproduce with a servile fidelity the ideals and forms of the west', or, worse, the 'lifeless machinery of the British bureaucratic system'.[34] This doomed Indian nationalism 'to repeat the cycles of the occident's success and failure' and the Indian people to a 'mechanical subordination to Leviathan'. Aurobindo pointed instead to the 'free synthetic communal order',[35] or association of communities, which constituted the genius of Indian politics from ancient times. Religion for him was not an exclusive normative code but a way of living, which had produced a series of overlapping and supportive communities from the joint family, through 'urban republics' to what he called the 'regional order'. His description of this 'synthetic, communal order' and its sources of legitimation in the classic literature was somewhat reminiscent of Ram Raz's description of sabha and panchayat one hundred years before.

Drawing on Ranade and others, however, he also specifically linked his argument with praise for the immediate pre-colonial homelands. Before foreign intervention, by which he meant both Muslim and British, the idea of an Indian empire was not homogenization and centralization. It was instead 'a uniting rule that respected every existing

regional and communal liberty',[36] avoiding autocracy and a 'mechanical oneness'. Indian political representation, again, was a delicate skein of communal representation, not the system of class rule of the West where political order was representative only of the 'political mind of part of the nation'.

This was not a vision of a communalist or Hindu state, though Aurobindo seemed inclined to blame the Muslims for exacerbating tendencies to decay which were already present in the medieval Indian body politic. Instead, he argued that most Muslims were Indians first and stood naturally within this tradition of voluntary community association. Akbar and Guru Nanak had been Indian statesmen first and foremost, rather than a Muslim and a Sikh. They had attempted to forge 'a common political patriotism', to unify all Indians. Nevertheless, the last failed attempt to re-create the true Indian polity had come at the time of the decline of the Mughal Empire. The Rajputs, Sikhs and especially Marathas had been the last hope for the 'free unity of a free people' before the 'uniform subjection'[37] of colonialism. Though Aurobindo energetically essentializes the genius of India, his is a specifically political philosophy, a rational patriotism. It is more complex and less spiritual in content than Gandhi's *swarajya*. It clearly draws on his experience of the Bengali roots of the swadeshi movement of 1900–10.

As Sugata Bose has argued,[38] a close political ally of Ghosh, Bipan Chandra Pal, propagated a similar idea of nation, stressing the nurturing aspect of nation rather than its rational ordering aspect. Bose argues that Partha Chatterjee has overlooked this other form of radical nationalist ideology in India which seemed more suited to the country's social complexity than the derivative discourses of western nationalism, either liberal or socialist. He shows that Bipan Chandra Pal and Aurobindo both drew on an older tradition in Bengal represented by Bankimchandra's famous hymn to the Mother, 'Bande Mataram'. These ideals of nation as Mother were enunciated by the swadeshi singers who took their message out to the small towns and the countryside during the political upsurge after the partition of Bengal in 1905. This legitimation of nationalism in terms of female virtue and power was neither 'dominated' nor 'derivative' according to Bose; 'Nationalist thought, even at the moment of departure, may well have found idioms of articulation that overlapped with European forms and yet at the same time opposed both the problematic and the thematic of colonial knowledge.'[39]

Bose's reading of swadeshi songs emphasizes the strong normative

force of the idea that people should buy the produce of local looms and other artisan products, so renewing the social bonds which create local and regional communities.[40] These songs stress the relationship between mother's milk, the cow, the tough whiteness of homespun cloth and the virtue of the land. They drew on the affective relations created by the surviving routines of exchange and interdependence in rural Bengal. There were still weavers in every village who produced simple cloths for daily work even at a time when Manchester imports accounted for more than a third of the market in cloths of middle and higher quality. One element of nationalist ideology and action at the turn of the twentieth century was thus firmly rooted in Bengali society: it drew not on invented tradition, in Hobsbawm's argument, but on an old tradition.

Bose also suggests that the Bengali revolutionaries' hymns to the Mother did not necessarily imply the exclusion of Muslims, who were antagonized by the apparent idolatry inherent in the identification of the Mother with the goddess Durga, special protector of Hindu Bengal.[41] Muslims, he argues, had creatively contributed in song to this very tradition. At the same time, many of its protagonists had always held that all religions had equal validity, at least in this life. It is the case that Bengali popular culture saw much more interpenetration between the different religious idioms than the elite revivalists or the older pandit and *mullah* traditions tended to recognize.

Yet themes of old patriotism could be used to support political arguments which were thoroughly exclusive of Muslims and others. Nationalist thought here could be seen as much more 'derivative', even while it seemed to be promoting Indian cultural icons with great vigour. In this regard, other strands of the ideology which took form during the swadeshi movement and the revolutionary period 1905–10 were less nuanced and more aggressive than Aurobindo's. V.D. Savarkar, the Maharashtrian revolutionary who wrote of the 1857 Rebellion as India's war of independence and was ultimately exiled to the Andaman Islands by the British, had much in common with his Bengali coeval. He saw the Sikh uprisings and the Maratha state as movements linked to India's freedom. He also invoked the idea of the universal Hindu ruler—the *chakravartin*. But his was a relentlessly Hindu supremacist view of history: 'It was to realize this great ideal of the Hindu-Pad Padshahi—the galactic Hindu empire—and to liberate Hindudom from the shackles of the Muslim domination that the Marathas waged a relentless war',[42] he says. He interprets the Maratha rulers' desire to establish their dominance in the great north Indian Hindu holy places as a drive for the Hindu

empire. He castigates Maratha 'regionalism' and 'provincialism', the desire to put homeland before the wider Hindu nation.

The softer notion of Indian nationalism as a free alliance of energized regional cultures was already in the very early years of the century in contention with two forms of the unitary state. One of these was very closely modelled on the western European nation-state, intended to be secular, welfarist and ultimately socialist in form. The other, which purported to draw on Indian pre-colonial tradition but was heavily influenced by the European race theory and understanding of state religion, was to be Hindu and authoritarian. Ultimately, these forms were to win out and are even now in contention. A looser, federal union of regional homelands in place of the relatively centralized Republic of India seems now no more likely than it was in the days of the Nehru dynasty. But the idea of the India of homelands, a concept with much clearer indigenous intellectual and institutional roots remained an alternative programme until much later in the twentieth century than is commonly thought. The Tamil populist movement of the 1930s associated with E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, for instance, projected Tamilnadu as an ideal of constructive popular culture which encompassed Hindus, Muslims and Christians.[43]

Mahatma Gandhi himself, for all the profound influences he acknowledged of Christianity, Tolstoyan idealism and other Victorian creeds, has a good claim to be regarded as one of the last of the old exponents of Indian ethical politics. It is, of course true, as Richard Fox[44] argues, that many aspects of Gandhian ideology should be seen as a 'nativising' constructions, rather than the embodiment of an actual indigenous past. In addition to well-known western classics of moral rearmament and social idealism, however, Gandhi drew on living Gujarati traditions propagated in the late nineteenth century by Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta, a Jain diamond merchant and mystic who preached the need for man's liberation from the passions as a precondition both of justice on earth and later salvation.[45]

There are other ways in which it makes more sense to see western influences as reconfirming and clarifying rather than constructing Gandhi's vision of India. In the first place, Gandhi's thought was profoundly humoural in the sense that he made a direct analogy between the bio-moral status of the individual and that of the state. Virtuous lands like virtuous people were unpolluted by sin. According to Gandhi, that sin might be lust, violence or the ingestion of foods that were inappropriate because they were heating, such as alcohol or onions, or because they were beings unlawfully killed, above all the cow. Western homeopathy

and Ruskinism may have borrowed some of these themes and recycled them for Indian use, but they more clearly drew on the traditions of political pathology, which were discussed in Chapter 1. These traditions were still represented in Gandhi's early life by old Gujarati patriots such as Diwan Hargovinddas Kantawala.[46]

Second, Gandhi saw communities as moralized networks of giving and receiving. One ought to buy the weaver's produce, not Indian machine-made cloth, let alone cloth produced in Manchester, because one was in turn dependent on the custom of the weaver if one was a herdsman or a peasant farmer. While this partly represented a romantic, late-nineteenth-century idealization of the Indian village, it was equally consonant with older ideas of right government which were still currently believed, if not necessarily acted on, in India's villages. 'We are the government in the villages,' he stated, 'if the subjects are straightforward and truthful, the king cannot be otherwise.'[47] There is no evidence that Gandhi ever read the Muslim akhlaq literature, but some of its ideas overlapped with those of the Vaishnavite Gujarati ethical tradition he was brought up in. Again, while Gandhi's knowledge of Islam appears to have been partly drawn from Washington Irving's *Life of Mahomet and His Successors*,[48] his contact with Indian Muslim activists and community leaders in South Africa appears to have given him direct access to, if not a deep understanding of, Indo-Muslim ethical and political ideas. Thus, while the *point d'appui* between Gandhi and India's Muslims may have appeared to be the contemporary issue of the fate of the Khilafat, he and his Muslim interlocutors often also stressed the importance of shared ethical ideas and institutions which generated equity.

Much the same can be said about Gandhi's sense of the Indian land and its people. His public writings in *Navjivan* and the English journals invoked an idea of India (or 'Hindustan') which appeared to be the 'land of the Hindus'. Gandhi never denounced the wickedness of Muslim conquerors or distanced himself from the Muslim community in the manner of Savarkar or even Aurobindo Ghosh, but his constant play in the themes of the Kingdom of God Ram, Mother India and the sacred cow, or ancient sages such as Shankaracharya[49] sent a message of exclusivity, at least to his elite Muslim readers.

On the other hand, Gandhi's speeches on his travels appear to be much more mixed and flexible. He usually rooted himself firmly in regional traditions of political virtue and resistance, speaking specifically to the different communities of Maharashtra or the Punjab, or

Tamilnadu, mentioning the great kings, fighters and learned men of the past, sometimes invoking 'good' Muslim leaders and statesmen. When speaking in north India, his preference for Hindustani rather than the Sanskritized Hindi beloved of the Hindu nationalist leadership or the Persianized Urdu gaining strength among the Muslim leadership, shows him identifying with the older traditions of Hindustan, not with the more modern and divisive ones.[50] This was the principal on which the linguistic redivision of the states took place in 1920.

Gandhi's position was akin to that of the earlier patriotic tradition which had been evident in 1857, and even in some of the statements of Sayyid Ahmad Khan before 1880. In 1921 he lauded the following statement by an Indian Christian: 'All Indians, whether they be Hindus, Muslims, Parsis or Christians are all the sons and daughters of the self-same mother and so true brothers and true sisters.'[51] For all its sentimentality, this was a vision of the complementary patria or desh in which communities coexisted with contiguous and overlapping, though not assimilable, political ethics.

Richard Fox, among other commentators, has stressed the extent to which Gandhism was a reinvented discourse created out of modernity and influenced by the thinking of the colonial world. At one level it certainly was so. Gandhi spoke, like C.F. Andrews, in the idiom of Victorian moral rearmament and created a kind of counter-eugenicist language which inverted that of the pre-War nationalist leadership: we Indians are better fitted for the war of all nations against all, because our character and substance is not polluted with violence, lust and love of pleasure. The other themes mentioned above, however—good counsel, the charisma of land and the particular virtues of the regional people and the link between physical substance and moral worth—were more obviously drawn from a continuing indigenous tradition of political and moral philosophy. They provided the hermeneutic link for the more abstract sense of nation. They were 'old traditions' rather than 'invented traditions', and to return to the work of Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolph,[52] they represented the 'modernity of tradition'.

Indian Empire Loyalism After 1885

The British were aware of the danger that they faced from the combination of Indian nationalism with Indic and Indo-Muslim patriotic traditions. The dimmer colonial observers tended to categorize the latter traditions as reactionary, Brahminical or responses of blind prejudice against the West. The more intelligent ones, such as Valentine Chirol,

and some domestic political theorists, such as Lionel Curtis,[53] were prepared to concede the reality of indigenous Indian patriotisms, but argued that the people had been misled by self-seeking nationalist politicians. In the early nineteenth century, moderate reformers in the tradition of James Tod, Mountstuart Elphinstone and the Younger Mill believed that they could promote the development of India by annexing its regional and national cultures and crossing them with 'useful knowledge' derived from the West. After 1858 a series of strategies were instituted to head off national feeling and turn it into support of the Empire.

Almost all sensible observers believed that India could never aspire to the same position in the Empire as the 'White Dominions'. Ultimately, there were, and could be no links of kin, religion or culture to bind the nations together. To neutralize Indian nationality, it was therefore necessary to stress the quasi-feudal link (*swamibhakti*) between leader and liegeman out of which wider and less tractable sentiments of love of homeland (swadeshabhiman) had emerged. After 1880, British attention focused increasingly on individual Indian princes who were intended to act as direct conduits of Indian loyalty from their own liegemen to the Queen Empress or King Emperor. This strategy was a complement to the staging of the great imperial *darbar*s which Bernard Cohn[54] so aptly analyzed.

In the works of British publicists and memoirs of civil servants, the personalities of the rulers of the princely states of Rajputana (Kotah, Udaipur, Jodhpur) were an object of ever-increasing attention. Dilating on the virtues of the Maharaja of Idar, for instance, Lord Hardinge reckoned that he was 'A "white man" among Indians'.[55] This was a strategy different from the attempt to foster a broad sense of subordinated nationality among Indian 'peoples' advocated by Tod and Metcalfe a century before. In other contexts, though, the British still attempted to put what they saw as national sentiments to use. In the army after 1857, they sometimes sought to attach regimental loyalties to the martial traditions of particular localities: thus the 'Mahratta', Rajput and Punjabi regiments stood alongside the caste and religious categories of Sikhs, Punjabi 'Mussulmans', and Dogras.[56]

In their attempt to build support among conservative politicians the colonial authorities often had to take recourse to themes of liberal nation building and modernization. This sentiment, duly reinterpreted in the context of an India ripe for Dominion status, was the ideology of men such as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru,[57] Sir Srinivasa Shastri and Sir C.Y. Chintamani, who sat on councils and committees with the British and

edited liberal newspapers. It was also the ideology of the many Indian members of the Indian Civil Service who genuinely believed in the role of the British Indian Empire as a steel frame for a future Indian nation. Indian Empire loyalism cannot be interpreted simply as expediency, greed or sycophancy. It drew on genuine political ideas, ones which the British often proclaimed but usually did not themselves live up to, a fact which Gandhi was quick to exploit.

It was not only the political theory of liberal modernization, however, which helped the British to maintain their power and some degree of moral hegemony well into the 1930s. They were also able to draw on conservative versions of political ideologies of the homelands. Eugene Irschick, for instance, has carefully demonstrated how the British 'construction' of Tamilnadu after 1790 was matched by, and formed in dialogue with a distinct sense of Tamil identity generated by high-caste Vellala land controllers.[58] This sense of strong cultural identity (we would say patriotism) emerged in distinction not only to outsiders such as northern Muslims and Brahmins, but also set itself against other more popular and local traditions. This form of Tamil-ness, moreover, seems to have been inclusive of the Muslims and Christians who remained distinctively Tamil in culture. It could take different political forms. Radical Dravidianism, propagated by the atheistical E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, emphasized popular participation and argued that an antique communitarian ideology infused the Tamil homeland. The conservative magnates and businessmen of the Justice Party,[59] who worked with British officials against the Tamilnadu Congress, stressed the difference of the south from northern Hindi-based populism and argued that the extreme hierarchy which supposedly characterized the north was alien to Tamilnadu.

Other older political traditions also provided unsteady support for the embattled colonial regime. In the 1820s, Lushington had regarded 'Jatness' as a broad non-Brahmin regional identity. Despite the porousness of the cultic and marriage patterns of the Jats, over time this identity was transformed into something more like a sense of the Jats as a 'caste'. The influence of the Arya Samaj on both urban and rural Jats after 1880 increased the sense of separateness. This 'Jatness' was invoked both by conservative community leaders, such as Sir Chottu Ram,[60] who sometimes gravitated to the British side against the Congress, and also by radical Arya Samaj teachers of a much more political bent. But in either case, popular communitarian and anti-hierarchical ideologies with a long history in the Jatwara countryside remained

active forces in political mobilization. In a similar manner the communitarian populist ideology which spilled across the boundary between Hindus and Sikhs in the Punjab was also drawn on as a resource by the Punjab Unionist party which unsteadily united the interests of both Hindu Jat and Muslim Jat agriculturalists and stood for a conservative nationalism within the British Empire.

Patriotism and Popular Nationalism

The concepts of local patriotism, political ethics and social communication which I have been developing in this book seem, finally, to be of some service in approaching the difficult question of peasant nationalism. Several groups of theories purport to account for the development of mass rural nationalism in India after 1916. The old colonial view concentrated on the activity of agitators who manipulated the peasantry into opposing the Raj, when in fact it was the British who stood between them and the exploitative lawyer and moneylender. Something of that line of argument persisted in the works of the early 'Cambridge School', where the heterogeneity and factitious nature of many of the peasant agitations of 1916–23 was stressed. A more mainline set of arguments has stressed the social structural conditions for peasant rebellion. D.A. Low,[61] for instance, wrote that the key actor in the rural struggle was the 'middle peasant' pressured by the state's demand for revenue or the large landlord's demand for rent during a period of economic turbulence and declining profits from agriculture.

The ideology of rural nationalism has received attention from the Subaltern Collective. Ranajit Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Rebellion*[62] made an important contribution here by pointing to a number of defining characteristics of peasant resistance, especially the manner in which it rested on millenarian ideas of Ramrajya, or the rule of righteousness, and sought to establish zones of divinely ordained equity and virtue which were often congruent with mythic political kingdoms. Though categorized as 'resistance' and essentialized as a more or less ahistorical essence of peasant behaviour, Guha's insistence on the autonomy of peasant political action and discourse and on the importance of a concept of liberated space in rural revolt is of great significance.

Gyanendra Pandey[63] also made a significant observation when he argued that the caste rhetoric of the 1919–22 peasant movements in Awadh was not exclusive. What peasant leaders sought was the joint and mutually supporting action of complementary and virtuous castes against the injustices and corruption of the rural order. Finally, in the

most outstanding monograph to emerge from the whole Subaltern Studies movement, Shahid Amin[64] has drawn attention to the long-term memories of rural party politics against which the murders of policemen at Chauri Chaura in 1922 must be set.

During these events rural people had many voices and many interests and we should beware the homogenizing rhetoric of nationalism as much as that of imperialism in interpreting them, Amin argues. Yet there were political traditions which informed the rural nationalist volunteers of the Gandhian years and these long antedated the intervention of urban politicians. Amin points, for instance, to the fact of the long-standing antipathy of peasants and artisans in the surrounding villages to the Sikh family of Dumri which had been awarded large confiscated estates in 1859 as a result of loyalty to the Raj.[65] In 1922 again, the Dumri loyalists were pitted against local insurgents.

This persistence of some local political traditions between the Mutiny–Rebellion and the Gandhian movement is striking. It means we can speak of rural parties and rural politics. These might be energized by particular economic conjunctures: the onset of high prices or labour shortages, or by particular villainies of the imperial police. But nationalist political activity in the countryside was not a simple reaction either to these economic and political circumstances, or to the 'mobilizing' genius of townsmen. What we see in this case is a tradition of rural patriotism being enlisted against a tradition of rural imperial loyalism represented by families of the police, government servants and retired Indian non-commissioned officers. Amin's treatment of rural politics seems to me to be more convincing than his earlier essay which argued that rural people reacted to Gandhi with almost superstitious awe, as indeed colonial officials and orientalists argued.[66]

Peasant nationalism, therefore, drew on some of the ethical arguments and notions of the charisma of the land discussed earlier. According to these ideas, the rulers should receive good counsel from properly appointed panchayats; common rights and access to resources should be maintained; rural capitalists should serve the community and not garner excessive profits. Above all, proper management of the countryside depended on low, fixed and predictable land taxes and customary rentals. When rural leaders denounced the inequity of maximizing landlords or colonial officials who constantly raised the land revenue, they often invoked the equitable revenue rates of earlier rulers such as Ranjit Singh, Haidar Ali and Emperor Akbar. During the rebellions in eastern UP in the 1920s and 1930s the proper rules of the old rajas of Benares

were sometimes invoked as was the permanent settlement of Jonathan Duncan, Resident of Benares at the end of the eighteenth century.[57] This is somewhat ironic, as in the earlier century, the rajas were known as rack-renters and Jonathan Duncan significantly raised the rates of the old Awadh land revenues.

The ubiquity of the call for a permanent settlement or *bandobast* for popular panchayats on matters of justice and taxation provided fertile soil, once again, in which the urban nationalists of Allahabad, Lucknow and Benares could root their organization and appeal. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya's rural organization of 1908–15 was pitched to speak to the virtuous, and largely high-caste small landlord and upper tenant, especially impoverished members of old coparcenary bodies. The message that the rural populists and the first Peasants' Association (Kisan Sabha) propagated between 1907 and 1919 emphasized an equitable settlement, rural self-government, cow protection and the use of Hindi instead of the complex Persianized Urdu which gave local subordinate officials such an advantage in dealing with country people.[58] This sort of policy was taken up by the Congress peasant associations of the 1920s and 1930s. It had appeal across a broad range of class interests and castes.

Here, however, we glimpse the limitations of the notion of the homogenized peasant resister. Where some members of the Subaltern Collective have overstated their case is in arguing for the prime importance of radical resistance in the countryside and in investing the peasant with a kind of superior social virtue. For, along with the package of rural ethical and political ideas went other ideas which are less acceptable to today's idealistic left wing. Much of the rhetoric of the virtuous peasant was Hindu in tone, and the stress on cow protection was, by this stage, potentially divisive as far as Muslim small landholders and large tenants were concerned. While officials of the Kisan Sabha and their supporters called for a limit to the powers of the landholders, they were extremely hostile to any suggestion that their own undertenants receive occupancy rights and set their faces against wider land reform.[59] Most significantly, the rising of low-caste people, especially Chamars (occupationally polluted leather workers) who comprised much of the landless labour class in this region, excited fear and revulsion in the minds of the high-caste rural patriots.[60] The subaltern category therefore was split neatly into two, between the despised truly proletarian and the virtuous but impoverished peasant and petty holder. The rhetoric and ethical ideas of old patriotism could indeed help support and root rural

nationalism, but there were strict limits to its radicalism and in some respects it was highly conservative. Old humoural–caste ideas died hard.

Reflections

This chapter, the final one of the group of Radhakrishnan Lectures, has argued against the radically 'modernist' understanding of Indian nationalism, especially in its regional varieties, and especially before the 1930s. Indian nationalism, it has argued, was widely rooted in society and moulded by ideologies, political norms and social organizations which derived from a deeper indigenous inheritance. That inheritance, of course, had itself been modified by several hundred years of contact with the wider world, but it was not in origin or spirit a product of European bourgeois discourse or political organization. This inheritance, again, was particularly vital in the Indian regions, though it was also drawn on in the creation of the wider concept of Indian civilization and polity.

Historical arguments are often scrutinized for their contemporary political implications, and this is nowhere more so than in India. My view is that the free play of academic ideas is a good thing in itself, particularly where a rather introverted historical establishment holds sway, as, for instance, liberal empiricism does in Britain or Marxian nationalism in India. The role of the gadfly in literature, the humanities and the arts is of great importance. History precisely designed to assuage the sufferings of the people often does exactly the opposite because it is so easily assimilated into the rhetoric of righteous tyranny. This sort of appropriation has happened time and time again this past century in the hands of the totalitarian right and the totalitarian left.

However, if we look at the content of the historical arguments themselves, the idea of the patriotisms of the Indian regions may well have resonance. It is generally agreed among politicians and political scientists that the Indian Constitution since Independence has been too centralized because it represents a rigidifying alliance between the ideas of the old colonial bureaucracy and Soviet-style planning. What Aurobindo called the 'free, synthetic communal order' of the Indian regions (he meant 'communal' in the sense of 'community', of course) or what we have called old patriotisms may provide a way of linking political sentiment and political service in a variable geometry of politics which eliminates many of the tensions of the modern Indian state. It was after all in the atmosphere of tension between an over-centralized

central government and regional expressions of identity that various forms of communalism (in the pejorative sense) have thrived.

The older inheritance of patriotisms and political ethics may provide, therefore, a holding net of institutions of civil society between the irresponsible fragment and the overbearing centre. Changed beyond all recognition though these networks and ideologies may be even since the nineteenth century, there still exists a deep sense of pride and identification with Tamil-ness or Punjabi-ness, for instance, alongside a conviction of what is right and proper in government which does not represent either mechanical western rights theories or the power principle of the modern state. Such ideas do not render religion or community redundant, but can be acted upon by politicians and public men to build alliances across these fractures. If the twenty-first century sees the emergence of the 'Europe of the regions', it may also see the emergence of an 'India of all the patriotisms'.

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65. Ibid., pp. 26, 31.
66. Shahid Amin, 'Gandhi as Mahatma: Gorakhpur District, Eastern UP, 1920–21', in R. Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies*, iii (Delhi, 1984), pp. 1–61.
67. Report on the Kisan Sabha in the trans-Ganges area of Allahabad District, UPCID Memo, Home Political Dept D., February 1921, 13, National Archives of India, New Delhi.
68. See, e.g., *Abhyudaya*, 21 June 1913. I previously called this 'Hindu populism' because of the strong influence of 'Hindu' themes and because this movement was neither a purely elite intervention nor a 'class' movement. That description, however, did not capture the movement's inheritance of political ethics and put too much weight on the term Hindu. This was not Hindu 'revivalism', let alone 'Hindu nationalism'. Cf. Bayly, *Local Roots*, pp. 217–21.
69. E.g., *Leader*, 29 March and 20 May 1922 (the so-called 'Ekka' movement among UP peasants).

70. Inder Narayan Dwivedi on the Kisan Sabhas, *Abhyudaya*, 24 September 1945; interview with Pt P.K. Malaviya, January 1968; Dwivedi, a rural patriot leader, revealed his concern about the activity of 'illiterate peasants'. He and other 'respectable' rural leaders were concerned about the role of Chamars, leather workers who were traditionally 'unclean'.

5

From Ritual to Ceremony: Death Ritual and Society in Hindu North India since 1600*

Hindu India never developed a rich mortuary art like that of the ancient cultures of China and Egypt. The most famous mausoleum in the subcontinent, the Taj Mahal, is a Muslim monument; and if Indians were asked to single out any group for the intrinsic interest of their funerary rites, they would probably choose the Zoroastrian Parsis who exposed their dead in the famous 'Towers of Silence'. Yet the funeral services and rites for ancestors of the orthodox Hindus embody beliefs central to their whole philosophy and provide a dramatic display of the essential

*I have been unusually dependent on the ideas and insights of others in writing this chapter. Professor J.C. Heesterman of the University of Leiden has been particularly indulgent to my stumblings in a field where he has much greater expertise. Mr J.B. Harrison of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, and Professor Eric Stokes, Dr C.J. Baker, Rev. Dr Ian Clark of Cambridge, Dr S.B. Kaufmann and Professor Walter Hauser of the University of Virginia have all been very helpful.

This chapter was originally published in Joachim Whaley (ed.), *Mirrors of Mortality. Studies in the Social History of Death* (London, 1981), pp. 154–86. The major recent treatment of the issue has been Jonathan Parry, *Death In Banaras* (London, 1993). Somewhat earlier Lata Mani had highlighted the extent to which the debates concerning sati revolved around the issue of the nature of 'tradition' rather than the fate of women as such; ('Contested Traditions', in S. Vaid and K. Sangari (eds), *Recasting Women. Essays in Colonial History* (Delhi, 1989). I have included it here because the book was generally unavailable in India. This also seems to me an example of an 'old' i.e. continuing tradition of social practice which was taken up and recast by the modernizers and nationalists of the twentieth century, notably by Dayananda Saraswati of the Arya Samaj and by Gandhi. My treatment of the theme 'from ritual to ceremony' smacks too much of the modernization theory for contemporary taste. It would need to be nuanced with reference to anthropological studies such as J. Laidlaw and C. Humphrey, *The Archetypal Actions of Ritual. A Theory of Ritual Illustrated by the Jain Rite of Worship* (Oxford, 1994).

features of the still-tenacious caste system. The rites themselves are also remarkably ancient. They were recorded as early as in the *Laws of Manu* in the second or third century BC.[1] They appear in elaborate and often gruesome exegesis in the later books called the *Puranas*, especially the *Markandeya Purana* (*c.* AD 400–800);[2] and the practice of the orthodox remains outwardly similar today, even though attitudes to the rituals and their institutional context have changed over recent generations.[3]

It is perhaps this appearance of continuity which has discouraged historians of medieval and modern India from taking much interest in death rituals, or indeed in rituals of any kind. This is a curious omission in a society which has given over so much of its time and its disposable income to ritual, and where funerals are so much part of the fabric of daily life. Anthropologists have, of course, used the form of funerals to elucidate their theories of social[4] and, more recently, mental structure.[5] But no periodization of the institutions or of the attitudes to death comparable to that of Ariès or Stannard has been attempted.

This chapter begins to trace some lines of historical change in three elements of the funeral practice and ideology of high-caste north Indians. The first is the cremation itself and the customs associated with it. The second is the series of rites called *shrāddha* or *parvana shrāddha*, roughly translated as 'pious oblations for the dead', which take place among high castes between ten and twelve days after cremation and thereafter on the monthly and annual anniversaries of death. Third, there are the irregular oblations which richer and more religious people continue to make to the spirits of the ancestors for up to three generations after death at the most holy pilgrimage places of Hinduism. These shrāddha rites were traditionally thought to aid in the transformation of the spirit of the dead (*prēta*) into a hallowed and beneficent ancestor (*pitr*, cognate with the Latin *pater*, father).

The chapter shows that no abrupt and widespread changes in attitudes to or institutions of death occurred in Hindu India over the last three centuries or so, but that there were significant changes of emphasis. These changes reflect and elucidate modifications in the ideology and inner institutions of Hinduism as it emerged from the period of Muslim rule, faced the influx of Christian missionary teaching, and came to terms with western rationalism and intrusive government. Yet the word 'reflect' is inadequate, for until the last few generations the ritual arena has not simply been a passive mirror of social changes outside, ritual

has been an active force in the creation of the Indian social order, a realm of conflict and danger where new statuses can be asserted or destroyed.

To understand the changes of emphasis in death rituals in recent centuries, it is necessary to grasp that Hindu funerary institutions and ideologies were never entirely consistent, even in the ancient culture.[6] There was a hidden contradiction between what might be called the 'tribal' side of the ritual and the philosophies and devotional ideas which gave it meaning. The tribal aspect was concerned with succouring the dead spirits and 'making' ancestors. Its aim was to get the soul of the deceased rapidly into heaven through prayer and oblation, and to confirm the unity and moral continuity of the extended family group. An ulterior but related motive was often to exalt the genealogy of the bereaved family through the conspicuous gifting of priests and by lavish donations at the holy places. But in the eyes of the devotional and philosophical movements which derived from the same corpus of literature and tradition, death rites were at most an act of commemoration and an opportunity for rededication by the living, with little influence on the ultimate fate of the dead.

This contradiction in attitudes to the meaning of ritual becomes clear if we consider philosophy. It was the doctrine of transmigration of souls and *karma* which was the spinal cord of the mature Hindu cosmological system.[7] Karma implies that the moral and physical status of beings in this world reflects the cumulative energy of their actions for evil or good in past incarnations. They can only attain salvation (*moksha*) by the progressive enhancement of their spirituality over countless rebirths. Now clearly, the notion of this austere and impersonal moral calculus working over aeons of time is not easy to fit with the belief that the dead man's relatives can intervene by appropriate rituals to secure him a quick place in a personal heaven. 'The law of karma is inexorable and impossible of evasion. There is thus hardly any need for God to interfere', states Gandhi.[8] But even those Hindus who put more faith in devotion to a direct personal God were often inclined to reduce the rituals of cremation and shrāddha to a mere ceremony of commemoration. Originally the divergent elements of funerary ideology must have arisen from the amalgamation of ancient Vedic rites with the later philosophical schemes of karma and transmigration.[9] But in more recent times this ambiguity of ideology meant that within a single local society there could simultaneously exist pressures to elaborate funerary rites for tribal or genealogical purposes, and movements which wished to reduce

them to simple acts of commemoration. This ambiguity has persisted to the present, but the chapter argues that the intervention of the missionaries and the colonial state has tended indirectly to strengthen the austere, philosophical element at the expense of the 'tribal'. Foreign influence therefore acted not to create a new mentality but to begin to resolve a contradiction within the traditional ideology.

Before passing on to the rituals themselves, two further points must be made. The first is negative and relates to the problem of generalization. The practices and ideas discussed here were those of high caste and urban people in north India. But much of the tribal and lower caste population had only tenuous links with the religion of the Brahmin. Amongst them death rituals continued to have a strong undertone of propitiation, even of exorcism: malevolent spirits of all sorts were conjured to be still. There is, for instance, the famous story of the mischievous spirit of the English conqueror of a south Indian district which could only be stilled by regular offerings of brandy and cigars.[10] Even amongst the high castes, though, practice differs markedly from district to district: less than four hundred miles from Benares there were Brahmins who buried their dead even as late as in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the importance of the orthodox rituals of the high castes cannot be underestimated. The pattern for the last two thousand years at least has been for Brahminic rituals to come to serve as a reference point for the lower castes and tribal peoples.[11] The growth of settled agriculture, and the development of towns and larger political units have everywhere provided the context for the slow assimilation of priestly to popular religion.

Second, the meaning of ritual and the direction of change is closely related to the caste system itself. Caste, of course, is the subject of acute scholarly debate, but most modern writers are agreed on one thing: that caste was and is much more flexible and 'negotiable' than was commonly thought in the nineteenth century.[12] Obviously, the ideal ranking of Brahmin priest, warrior, merchant and labourer was static, and in modern times it has proved difficult for individuals or families to secure recognition of a change in their caste status in a single generation. But the key unit within Indian society is the larger circle of families which, recognizing themselves to be of the same 'generic substance', marry and eat together (the *jati*). In India there are hundreds of thousands of 'caste' groups in this sense, and their rank within the wider system has often been uncertain or capable of improvement through appropriate transactions with other groups. The most usual manner of edging

upwards the status of one's own group has been to adopt the ritual customs and life-style of another group of unimpeachable caste status. The thinking behind this is quite simple. While caste appears in practice as a set of hereditary occupational groupings, its underlying rationale is as a hierarchy of purity and pollution.[13] Association with pure people and pure practices will therefore raise status, while association with the impure will degrade it.

So ritual can be seen as a dramatic embodiment of caste: as something that perpetuates it, but also at times as an arena in which 'negotiation' for higher status can occur. At the simplest level, the adoption of orthodox funerary patterns and shrāddhas for the ancestors could help establish a group's claim to be of clean caste status, since it associated them with Brahmin priests and other monitors who were absent from the rites of the impure. But once on the ladder, caste groups could use the order, duration and form of the rites as an implicit claim for higher status yet. Very logically, the lower the caste the longer the post-funerary rituals and oblation needed to be. Death was polluting, so Brahmins, being particularly pure, could remove the impurity of death in a shorter time.[14] This was usually deemed to be eleven days of ritual, rather than the fifteen days enjoined on middling caste groups, or the forty days which lower castes were supposed to undergo. Over time, then, many caste groups in an ambiguous position on the ritual ladder have sought to negotiate for higher status by shortening and simplifying their funerary ritual. Even here, though, we often glimpse the contradiction. Prestigious families needed to be seen as more pure, even austere. But at the same time, those which were involved in warfare and the politics of rural society needed to be seen as great and generous feast-giving men with exalted genealogies (the 'tribal' element). Changes in ritual often seemed, then, to be pointing in two directions at the same time.

Death, Cremation and Oblation

Death in India was regarded as a process rather than an event. In fact some classes of people such as ascetics were regarded as 'living dead', and had already gone through funeral rites. Life was thought to consist of the conjunction of various elements such as hearing, sight, locomotion and substance which were paradigms of the basic structure of the universe.[15] Hindu physiology was therefore governed by a philosophical system markedly different from that of the post-Renaissance West, and this was to cause conflict in the nineteenth century. There was no notion of the overriding importance of the activity of the heart or brain.

Instead, on the approach of death, the elementary parts of being, fifteen in number, unite with their respective origins: their corporeal faculties, such as vision and feeling, return to their original sources, the sun, the air, and so on. The loss of sight, of hearing, or of locomotion was regarded as a stage in physical dissolution rather than as the manifestation of an 'illness' which might terminate in death. So, for instance, a man who put his fingers in his ears and could not hear the usual buzzing was warned of the approach of death. It was a clear sign that the elemental deity Vayu who presided over hearing had left him.[16]

The spiritual and physical composition of the dying person was thought to alter as further signs of dissolution appeared. It was imperative to give the spirit access to the pure elements and preferably to a sacred river by which it could begin its journey to the realms of Yama, Lord of the Dead. Moving the dying onto the ground, outside the house, or even to a riverside burning place (burning *ghāt*) minimized the pollution of death in the household and also helped ensure that the entrapped spirit did not become a malignant ghost.

After all signs of life had left the body, there began a series of rites which were not generally complete for three generations (by which time the ancestor was deemed to have achieved beatitude), and lasted with great intensity for at least thirteen days. In normal circumstances the body was cremated at a caste burning ground usually near a river; the putative heir lit the pyre. Special funerary priests called *māhabrāhmans* conducted the ceremony of cremation, while monitors of the scavenging Dom caste actually handled the corpse and tended the fire. One consequence of the cremation itself was to perpetuate ranking within the caste system through proximity to the pollution of death. So the position of the Dom scavengers at the bottom of the caste hierarchy was reinforced, while the cremation priests, absorbing the sins and death of the deceased through the 'sacrifice' of the dead body, assured themselves of the most lowly position among Brahmins. The quality of the priests and the length of the rituals also ranked the family and kin of the dead man both in terms of other castes and by degree of relationship to him. The closer the blood tie, the deeper the pollution of death and the more protracted the rituals of purification.

The shrāddha oblations proper were not begun until the worst of the pollution of death had been removed. This was usually on the tenth day after the cremation among the highest castes, and proportionately later for others. Numerous offerings were also made on the important eleventh and twelfth days when it was also considered auspicious to lay

on feasts for Brahmins and caste-fellows. Thereafter shrāddha offerings became less intense except on the monthly and annual commemorations of the death day, and at certain regular festivals. In orthodox households the offerings themselves consisted of groups of balls of kneaded rice and wheat paste, mixed with various ritual substances such as honey and milk. These *pindas*, as they are known, were thought to form the actual food for the spirit in its first painful transitional phase as a tiny 'vapour body' beginning its hazardous ascent to the status of an ancestor. Later shrāddhas, particularly those made at holy places were supposed to consolidate the status of the ancestor as a beneficent influence in the life of the family and to aid its rapid transition to heaven. This was usually deemed to have occurred after three generations when the personal name of the ancestor was no longer used at the shrāddhas. But among the pious, wealthy and orthodox, the practice of shrāddha at particularly holy places became more and more popular during the first centuries of the Christian era. So at centres such as Benares, Gaya and Hardwar, there emerged a distinct set of shrāddha and pilgrimage priests who maintained records and became the hereditary genealogists of particular sets of families.

What we have called the 'tribal' element was prominent in all these rites. The word for 'relation' in Hindi, *sapinda*, is probably derived from the word pinda, the rice ball used in oblation. In this interpretation, the 'relations' were those up to the seventh (or sometimes tenth) degree of relationship whose right and duty it was to offer shrāddha for the deceased. In the Dayabhaga school of law which became prominent in eastern India after the twelfth century AD, the claim to heirship was actually considered to proceed from the competence to perform oblations.[17] Thus people such as barren women who were disqualified from doing shrāddha were also disqualified from inheritance. More commonly, the claim to heirship seems to have made the person capable of taking decisions in the ritual arena. So in a Benares law case of 1783 (which had been appealed from a caste council) the identity of the person who lit the funeral pyre was important evidence of inheritance.[18]

As a genealogical event of such significance to the moral and physical continuity of the family,[19] it was natural that funeral rituals would become embellished. Large shrāddha feasts at which a maximum number of relatives and priests were present became common. At the holy places, great men and political leaders began consciously to outdo each other in their gifts of money and lands to the shrāddha priests, or in the construction of burning and bathing ghāts. But as J.C. Heesterman

points out,[20] developments such as these were always to a greater or lesser extent at variance with scriptural authority and the high philosophy. The laws of Manu, for instance, enjoin a small company for shrāddha, at most three people and preferably only one learned Brahmin.[21] In the next section I go on to show how these contradictory tendencies were worked out in the century immediately preceding colonial rule. The emergence of new ruling dynasties during these years gave added impetus to the tribal and genealogical aspect of shrāddha which was especially visible at the holy places. But the strong anti-ritualism of devotional movements continued to represent the opposite philosophical tendency.

Funerary Pomp and Pilgrimage Centres in the Immediate Pre-colonial Period 1600–1800

From an early period particular centres which were associated with sacred rivers and their purifying properties became centres of Hindu pilgrimage. For 'just as certain limbs of the body are purer than others, so are certain places on earth more sacred'.[22] In the course of time, a hierarchy of holy places emerged in which the shrines of local godlings and sanctified human spirits were subordinated to a small number of *mahātmya tirthas*, or places of special spiritual merit which were venerated in a regular cycle by the most orthodox. The pattern was already established by the time of the great corpus of medieval Hindu lore, the *Purānas*, which were compiled from earlier sources between about AD 400 and 1000. These places achieved special importance for the performance of shrāddha rites because of the relationship between the concept of 'property' and 'competence to perform rites'.[23] It was held that a man could not achieve spiritual benefit from sacrifice on another man's property. The emergence of more sharply defined property rights in early medieval India probably contributed to the importance of holy places; since these were sanctified by the gods, anyone could sacrifice there without infringing on the privilege of others. Three such places were the cities of Allahabad, Benares and Gaya which were set on or near the river Ganges in the heartland of orthodox Hinduism. It is with the elaboration of ancestral rites at these three cities that we are concerned here.

First we need to distinguish between some of the types of death rituals which occurred at the holy cities. They all saw the normal volume of funerary activity necessary in any large centre of population with its burning grounds adjacent to streams and rivers. But these cities, and

especially Benares, also supported large numbers of elderly people who had come specifically to die in the holy places on the Ganges and so achieve immediate salvation. These communities of the moribund were quite large. In Benares between 1880 and 1908, there was an annual surplus of deaths over births of about 24 per cent or 2000–3000 people out of a population of about 1,80,000,[24] and qualitative evidence suggests that this had long been the case. Allahabad, on the other hand, was held in particular repute as a place to which lepers and others with festering diseases should go to die. A verse in the *Brāhma Purāna* lists the appropriate means of suicide for those about to perish from 'unnatural diseases', 'by fire, starvation . . . by ascending to paradise by a respectful pilgrimage to the Himalaya mountains . . . or by precipitating himself from the sacred Vuta tree at Allahabad, even a great sinner shall meet with supreme bliss in Paradise'.[25] The 'Vuta Tree' was supposed to be located near the great fort in Allahabad and lepers' suicides were common there until the British authorities forbade them in the 1810s.

The third category of death rituals associated with the holy cities were shrāddhas performed by people who came from all over India to honour their ancestors and speed their transition to Paradise. Such pilgrims would, of course, have performed the initial cremation and rites in their home villages, but occasional pilgrimage was considered particularly valuable. Usually these shrāddhas were combined with bathing, penance and charitable donation to release the pilgrim himself from his worst sins. It was the city of Gaya in the modern state of Bihar which achieved a particular reputation as an appropriate place for oblations to the ancestors.[26] The proper rites done within the sacred circle of Gaya were supposed to 'procure the immediate admission of [the pilgrim's] ancestors to Heaven'[27] and made further performance of shrāddha for them unnecessary. In popular mythology Gaya represented the prone body of a primeval giant who had obtained by heroic austerities the gift of sending to heaven the souls of sinners who approached him without their passing through the realms of Yama, Lord of the Dead.

These holy places were already established as all-India places of pilgrimage long before AD 1200.[28] But it was in a much more recent period that they took on their opulent and elaborate character as ritual complexes. Few buildings in Allahabad or Benares appear to date in their present form from before 1600. The majority of the great bathing and cremation wharves or ghāts on the River Ganges in Benares were constructed in the years 1730 to 1810 and most of the major temples and rest houses for pilgrims and Brahmins which dot the city appear to date

from the same period.[29] So, too, many of the most prestigious of the Brahmin teachers and scholars who inhabited the city in the nineteenth century traced their families' arrival there to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at the earliest. Though Gaya's rise to ritual pre-eminence can be dated back to the thirteenth century, the majority of its temples were also built between 1700 and 1800.[30] The Vishnu Temple, the most celebrated building here, was erected by the female ruler of the central Indian state of Indore as late as in 1770, while the other chief temple, the Gajadhar, appears to have been built about 1700 and modified in the following century. Fragmentary evidence on population and the area of the cities also suggests a very rapid advance between 1650 and 1800. This growth was associated with more general patterns of urbanization in north India. What sorts of change in contemporary society did it reflect?

First, the growth of the pilgrimage and funerary cities reflected the unity conferred on India through the consolidation of the Mughal Empire, paradoxically a Muslim state. The Mughals, working from a heartland around Delhi had absorbed into their domain Hindu Bengal to the east, and, before the end of the seventeenth century, large areas of central and western India. The Empire was linked together by a network of fortified small towns and military roads which were served by wells, groves and inns or caravanserais. At its height before 1720, Mughal rule gave greater security to the long-distance traveller or pilgrim than he had ever enjoyed before. Indeed, the state had a direct interest in promoting easy mobility between the various regions of India as it derived substantial revenues from trade and came to levy a charge on the pilgrims attending the ritual centres. The famous Mughal administrative treatise, the *Ain-i-Akbari*,[31] describes in detail the Hindu holy places and the practices which took place there, for they played a considerable role in the commercial and social fabric of the Empire. At Allahabad, Benares and the more westerly holy places it was the great Hindu servants of the Mughal Empire, and particularly the princes of Rajasthan, who initiated the modern phase of building in the holy cities.

The consolidation of Empire and the expansion of communications stimulated further social changes which diffused the fame of Benares and Gaya. The growth of commerce and the payment of the land revenue in money tended to absorb into the settled agriculture of the plains tribal, nomadic and warrior communities. Indirectly this process of settlement modified the culture of the fringe communities, often spreading amongst them more orthodox 'Sanskritic' or 'Brahminical' modes of worship.[32]

Many such groups had buried their dead and had not subscribed to a belief in transmigration. Their adoption of the classical rituals of cremation and shrāddha was, therefore, of great importance, since it registered not only their acceptance of the outward ritual of orthodox Hinduism, but also of the nominal supremacy of the Brahmin and the caste system.

The relationship between orthodox Hinduism and the marginal and low-caste communities was extremely complex. It is no longer possible to see the latter moving in a straightforward progression from 'animism' to 'Sanskritic Hinduism' as was once thought. Instead, these communities were constantly moving in and out of contact with the Hinduism of the Brahmin, consciously selecting aspects of orthodox ritual which could be accommodated within their universe and rejecting others. Nevertheless, the processes of agricultural expansion and political settlement increased the village and tribal clientele from whom the Brahmins and specialists of the holy places drew support. During the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, the Chero and Buiyar tribal populations of central India appear to have adopted shrāddha ceremonies.[33] Many lower caste groups in the settled areas too were able to employ wealth accumulated through local trade and service to move nearer to the practice of the higher castes. Funerary orthodoxy was one aspect of this.

Not all the 'new Hindus' of the nineteenth century emerged from tribal, 'animist' or low-caste backgrounds. Some were reconverts from Islamic practice. Communities which had been associated with Muslim government service or commerce had sometimes adopted Islamic customs, including burial. Most striking, perhaps, was the case of the Bishnois, a commercial community living in the small Muslim military centres near Delhi. The Bishnois had adopted Muslim names, marriage customs and burial rituals, though they continued to worship Hindu deities. This anomaly was explained by the story that Bishnois once murdered a Muslim judicial officer who had prevented them from burning a Hindu widow along with her husband's corpse, and 'compounded for the offence by pretending to embrace Islam'.[34] But as Muslim power and cultural influence waned all over north India at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries, many of these apostates adopted, or re-adopted, Hindu funerary customs. It was from the elites of these communities also that Allahabad, Gaya and Benares drew their growing numbers of pilgrims.

Weakening Muslim cultural influence was matched in the eighteenth

century by the rise of new regional Hindu regimes which inherited the fragmented satrapies of the old empire. It was among the rulers of these new, predominantly Hindu states—the Mahrattas in the west, the Jats near Delhi and the Bhumihar and Rajput rulers of the Gangetic plain itself—that the holy and funerary cities found their most energetic patrons. These ruling dynasties were often themselves drawn from nomadic or peasant communities of relatively low-caste status. An essential aspect of the consolidation of their power was a claim to legitimacy which entailed regular association with the cult centres of orthodox Hinduism.[35] By acquiring priests of sufficiently high status to perform ceremonies such as shrāddha, these princes could hope to justify their claim to Kshatriya (warrior) status which was the pride of the older Hindu ruling houses. The repetition and sanctification of the names of ancestors also aided in the creation of genealogical traditions in which their ancestors appeared as semi-divine descendants of the Sun and the Moon. The process of caste elevation was encouraged by the military and official Brahmin families who inhabited the territories of the rising dynasties. It was this simultaneous drive for political power and ritual status which accounts for the rising flood of Mahratta pilgrims to Allahabad, Benares and Gaya during the course of the eighteenth century, and the ghāt and temple building of Mahratta lords.[36] By 1820, nearly 8 per cent of the resident population of Benares was Mahratta and the city was regularly visited by armed Mahratta pilgrimages of up to 2,00,000 men in the more auspicious years. At Gaya, Bengalis and Mahrattas were the largest classes of pilgrims:

> Mahrattas give [to the priests] money, jewels, plate, fine cloth, elephants and horses. The very lowest person performing his devotions at one place cannot spend less including duties than 3½ Rs.; those who worship at two places cannot spend less than 5 Rs.; but many spend 100 Rs. . . . almost all the Mahrattas worship at 45 places, and several every year give 5,000 Rs.; while great chiefs expend 40 or even 50,000 Rs.[37]

It was in the elaboration of shrāddha, funeral feasts, offerings to the priests and offerings to the deity Yama that Hindu nobles displayed the honour of their ancestors. The notion that the spirit departed rapidly to adjudication and to a new incarnation did not encourage the creation of grandiose 'houses for the dead' like those of western classical antiquity. Nor was there any direct analogy in orthodox Hinduism to the idea of the resurrection of the body from its own tomb. The art of Hindu India

did not, therefore, develop a tradition of portraiture and civic commemorative architecture such as we find in the West. Ritual itself was the art form of pious commemoration.

The ritual specialists also took an active part in spreading the fame and reputation for sanctity of the holy places, emphasizing in particular the great merit to ancestors derived from performing shrāddha there. The orthodox hierarchy was not simply a static 'point of reference', as it often seems to be in ethnographical works; it was an active force shaping society. With a near-monopoly over the written word, Brahmins were able to embroider and build up references to Benares, Gaya and other places in everyday devotional works, such as the *Purānas* which were subject to constant revision and recension. The flow of Brahmins for instruction to the holy cities spread the fame of Kashi (Benares the illustrious) or Gaya Mahatmya (place of great merit) to a wider and wider audience. Many Puranic interpolations seem to date from the period between the end of the first millennium AD and the eighteenth century. In an early interpolation, the *Vishnu Purāna* has a troubled ancestral spirit proclaim:

> Would that a wise and blessed person be born in our family who not indulging in stinginess in spending wealth will offer wheat cakes to us, and would donate to the Brahmins for our sake jewels, clothes, a large conveyance, wealth and all enjoyments.[38]

Another adds in a practical frame of mind that the ancestor of anyone who presents a Brahmin with an umbrella during shrāddha would be protected from rain and sunstroke during his hazardous journey to the realms of Yama.[39] Echoing the complacency of all ancient seats of learning, a third verse asserts that a Brahmin of Gaya or Muttra who does not 'even know a single verse' of the Vedas is superior to Brahmins in all other places.

Before 1800, shrāddha at Gaya and Benares had become large-scale ritual industries. Ledgers still held by the ancestral shrāddha priests or *pāndas* (*Prāgwals* at Allahabad; *Gāyawals* at Gaya) illustrate a system of checking and accounting by which the specialists maintained and enhanced their clientele. If one investigates the streets behind the great bathing ghats of Benares, one might encounter Gajendra Nath Phattack. This man calls himself the chief priest of the Manikarnika Ghat which adjoins the major cremation ghāt of the city.[40] He adds the title of 'Royal Preceptor' (*Rājguru*) because his family has acted as shrāddha priest

and ritual genealogist for fifty-two princely houses over the last twenty generations or so. Like his ancestors before him, Gajendra Nath is the head of a hierarchy of lesser priests and ritual servants on the riverside. His ancestral clientele is of mixed caste but there is a strong bias towards the great warrior-landowner families of the state of Rajasthan who were the most prestigious donors at the holy places during the zenith of the Mughal Empire. Inscriptions on copper plates in the possession of the priest record the visits to Benares of, among others, the Raja of Bundhi and his train in 1658, 1680, 1727 and 1842.[41] On each occasion, the king formally accepted the head of the priestly family as his pānda, recognized earlier grants and donations made by his ancestors, performed shrāddha, and then gave a further donation to the priest. During the 1842 pilgrimage the then maharaja presented the priest with the revenues of a large area of land in Rajasthan and began the construction of a royal temple in one of the quarters of the city.[42] The visits of persons of lesser status were recorded on sheets of paper, and after about 1680 entered in a ledger book.[43] Here one can see the entries of men from as far afield as Delhi and the Punjab in Urdu, Persian and Hindi. There are also notes on the arbitration of conflicts between the pānda and his colleagues over their clients;[44] and records of gifts and grants. Until the present century, the pāndas would make regular tours of the distant areas in which their clients were most numerous to remind them of the needs of their ancestors.

Other ritual specialists also benefited from the growth of ancestral oblation at the holy city. Ordinary bathing priests incorporated their particular ghāts and temples into the ever more complex ritual round. Each ritual event required a separate donation to the Brahmins, and since the assertion of prestige required that a prince must be attended by the largest number of retainers, the sums expended became very large. The lower caste Brahmins who presided at the burning ghāts and the untouchable Doms who actually incinerated the bodies also flourished. Many pilgrims who came to perform shrāddha returned in their last years in order to die in the 'peace of Kashi'. The funerary specialists, manipulating both fear of pollution and fear of death, were able to amass huge fortunes. Some of the largest mansions adjoining the Harish Chandra Ghat on the river-front were built in the late eighteenth century by the family of Lakshmi Narayan Dom, reputedly one of the richest families in India. Yet these funerary specialists continued to stand on the very lowest rung of the caste system because of their constant association with the pollution of death. Good Hindus prayed for

more male children; the Harischandi Doms, it was rumoured, prayed for more deaths.

Devotional Movements: The Inefficacy of Ritual, 1500–1800

While the elaboration of orthodox ritual around the holy places was progressing in the years 1600–1800, other nearly contrary tendencies were also working beneath the complex surface of Indian religious life. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had been a period of revival in all forms of Hinduism, but notably there had been a great burgeoning of sectarian movements which proclaimed the way of total devotion to the Godhead (*bhakti mārga*) as a method of salvation superior to both ritualistic 'works' and 'knowledge'. The origins of these sects were as tangled as their philosophical differences were subtle, but to a greater or lesser extent their beliefs had encouraged ways of looking upon death and transmigration discountenanced display and elaborate ritual. One influence of these sects' view of death was the ancient tradition of Tantric Yoga[45] and mysticism which included the belief that it was possible to overcome physical death and attain beatitude on this earth without resort to the pain of rebirth. It was thought that alchemy or yoga could transform the corrupt human body into an incorruptible 'perfect body'. One area in which Tantric beliefs seems to have been influential was through the religious movement initiated by the teacher Kabir in the later part of the fifteenth century. Kabir, a social reformer, a bold enemy of Brahminical pride and caste distinction, opposed idol worship and the doctrine of reincarnation. A Muslim weaver by birth, Kabir sought a popular religious regeneration; in modern times he has been sanctified as an apostle of social reform and Hindu–Muslim unity. In his frontal attack on Brahminism, he deprecated holy places and death rituals also. According to him, the Hindu prejudice about Gaya or Benares was 'mere fantasy' as the attainment of spiritual experience does not depend on the sanctity of any given spot.[46] Kabir's doctrines were replete with references to Death as the 'Final Enemy', but in the context of a passionate belief that salvation could be obtained by all in this life:

> Dead is the physician, dead is the patient,
> The whole Universe is dead,
> Only Kabir will not die
> Who has his support in Rām [God][47]

The doctrine implied that shrāddha was wholly irrelevant to salvation, and held out promise of the immortality of the 'perfect body'. The

legends associated with the death of Kabir are interesting here. The story has it that there was a dispute between the saint's Hindu and Muslim followers as to whether the body should be buried or burned. But when the shroud was examined, there was no sign of Kabir's mortal remains besides a handful of rose petals. The devotees accordingly burned half the petals and buried the other half.[48] Yet in later centuries, the followers of Kabir (the Kabirpanthis) seem generally to have buried their dead.

The more orthodox Vaishnavite devotional sects which flowered in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries retained the doctrine of transmigration. Allusions to death in their literature are, however, rather tangential. The aim is to show that life is transitory and that only steadfast devotion to God can given it meaning. Thus the poet Surdas sings:

> Do not succumb to pride, for jackals, crows and vultures will devour the mortal body—
> It goes three ways; to worms, to excrement, or to the pyre!
> Where will be that freshness and beauty, that lovely form?
> . . . Surdas says that unless a man worships the Lord, he squanders his life.[49]

In general, north Indian Vaishnavite devotional cults retained the orthodox rites of cremation and a simplified form of shraddha, but for them, these forms could only have meaning if infused with love for God.[50] Bengali *bhakti* sources in the tradition of the great teacher Caitanya and his school are more precise. Here worship of 'inferior gods and ancestors' is either omitted or given a very low status, and 'service to Krishna is superior to all other acts'.[51] The shrāddha feast is reduced to a few acts of prayer and a general commemorative feast for the local community. Indeed in one text, the argument for performing shrāddha is turned on its head. The ancient books make the service so complicated, it is said, that no one can possibly get it right and the whole enterprise might as well be abandoned.

The antiquity and outward coherence of Hindu funerary ritual has hardly concealed the ambiguities, not to say contradictions, of their underlying philosophies and implications for society. The doctrine of transmigration and individual moral responsibility sits uneasily with the overt role of shrāddha in 'creating' ancestors and helping them achieve Heaven. In the same way, the conspicuous ceremony and expenditure arising from the 'tribal' aspect of the rites stands at variance with the strong scriptural admonition that there should be an austere individual sacrifice concerned as much with the soul of the sacrificer as

with that of the deceased. In pre-colonial times, the contradiction was never resolved, even for the priestly and royal elite. The close association of genealogy with the claim to kingship encouraged the extravagant 'tribal' aspect of shrāddha and swelled the funerary communities of the holy places. At the same time the austere spiritual individualism immanent in Hindu philosophy continued to feed movements of textual study and devotion which rejected ritual, especially the much-tainted rituals of death, as a way to salvation. But unlike western Europe where competing ideologies were able to eliminate each other and generally modify the rituals of death, these discordant elements achieved a symbiosis in Hindu India. The concept of spiritual hierarchy meant that even the most anti-ritualistic of religious teachers acknowledged that rituals might have value for the spiritually childlike.

As we shall see, colonial rule, superficial as it was in some respects, did create the conditions for a significant change of emphasis in funerary ritual over the last century. At first the security of a continental empire once again resulted in an expansion of 'tribal' display, especially at the holy places. But in the longer perspective, the shock of the colonial and Christian assault on some aspects of funerary practice unleashed a range of newer and deeper movements of reform. Despite their doctrinal differences, these movements were unanimous in emphasizing the austere, celebratory aspect of shrāddha. Urban and upper-caste India at least has widely begun to resolve the ambiguity in this direction. In the villages, less has changed.

Death and the Colonial State, 1780–1880

Much as missionaries and officials may have wished it, the onset of British rule in north India between 1763 and 1806 did not result in an abrupt period of westernization. In fact, like the Muslim empires before it, this supposedly Christian Empire presided over a substantial reinforcement of Hindu practice, a virtual reinvention of tradition. One early consequence of British rule was the spectacular growth of pilgrimage to the holy places for shrāddha and other purposes.[52] Communications improved with the restoration of political order while the British abandoned the dues which the state had once taken from pilgrims going to the holy places. These dues brought them little financial gain in India, and the odium of 'meddling in heathen religion' at home. Between 1780 and 1820, the number of pilgrims who went to Allahabad, Gaya and Benares each year may have trebled. Further west more settled conditions at the foot of the Himalayan mountains reinvigorated pilgrimage up to the lofty shrines of Baijnath and Badrinath. New security was

accompanied by a redistribution of wealth within the subcontinent. Bengali government servants together with merchant families who grew fat on external trade were conspicuous beneficiaries of the Pax Britannica. Though princely families remained major donors at the holy cities, these new men were emerging as a force. A Calcutta Deputy Accountant-General of the East India Company was active in renovating the Gaya temples.[53] At Benares, Khattri and Agarwala merchant families erected new cremation ghāts, bridges and temples. Pradip Sinha has shown for Bengal how wealthy factotums of the British in Calcutta retired to their native villages to spend large sums on, among other things, competitive shrāddha feasts.[54]

The ritual centres also benefited from the creation of an all-India railway network after 1850. They became accessible to prosperous village people who could not previously have afforded the time away from their fields. The Sanskrit scholar Monier Williams was startled to be assured by a Gaya priest in the 1870s that the coming of the railways had seen a sharp decrease in the appearance of ghosts. Speedier travel, he was told, enabled people to get to Gaya faster and move their relations quickly through the malignant phase and on to beatitude.[55]

L.P. Vidyarthi has argued that the nineteenth century saw the 'feudalization' of the priestly communities at Gaya.[56] The term is unhelpful, but the process recognizable. Debarred from warfare, the protected princes of the colonial period continued to lavish their wealth on building, donation and pilgrimage. Pilgrimages became longer and more elaborate and began to take on some of the characteristics of modern tourism. When the Maharaja of Tanjore visited Benares in 1821, this prince from the far south spent hugely and had prepared an elaborate 'souvenir volume' which contained paintings of the bathing places and temples which he had visited.[57] It was not surprising then that the priests and funerary specialists of the holy cities were able to build more and more sumptuous residences in the first half of the century. A group of Gaya genealogical priests was even admitted to the 1911 Imperial Darbar in Delhi. This curious mingling of the Puranic and Gothic came about because the British tended to see the Gayawals as equivalent to the College of Arms.

The British elaboration of Hindu tradition was more striking in the area of legal interpretation. We have noted that the Dayabhaga school of law related the right to inherit property to the ritual competence to carry out shrāddha. Far from reducing the ritual element, the British courts, including the Privy Council, interpreted the doctrine of 'spiritual

benefit' with even greater rigidity and extended some of its provisions to northern and western India where Dayabhaga had never been prevalent.[58] Yet this was a case where Hindu death rituals were embalmed rather than enhanced: the early nineteenth-century judgments made it clear that it was the competence and not the inclination or intention to perform shrāddha which was at issue.

In some areas, though, European administration had a sharper cutting edge. In the first decade of the nineteenth century there grew up a sustained assault on certain aspects of Hindu funerary practice which were seen to be 'contrary to nature'. British Protestant missionaries were in the van of this programme. But despite their reluctance to become involved, the colonial authorities also began to see themselves as having rights and duties in an area which had previously fallen wholly within the sphere of the lineage or caste. 'Suicide' at the holy places was the first object of attack in an uncoordinated series of local, provincial and central government ordinances which stretch from about 1780 to the celebrated outlawing of widow burning ('suttee' or *sati*) in 1829. Jonathan Duncan, the paternalist British Resident at Benares (1786–95), sought to end the suicide or self-mutilation of Brahmins used as a form of coercion in the pursuit of commercial or boundary disputes (*dharna*).[59] He deplored the 'predisposition of the people of this city to take poison on the slightest of pretexts'. Here the object of suicide was to throw the spiritual blame for the death of a Brahmin on opponents and thus reduce them to the lowest possible state in the next life, perhaps even 'a worm in ordure for 60,000 years'. In other cases, such as hurling oneself under the celebrated processional car of the god at Juggernaut (Jagannath) or the suicide of lepers at Allahabad or in the Himalayas, the aim was to acquire immediate entry into paradise as promised in the *Purānas*. While involuntary human sacrifice had disappeared from Hinduism at an early period, self-sacrifice was regarded as a mode of acquiring great merit, of ensuring a good reincarnation or even Paradise itself. By contrast, in Christendom, suicide was regarded as a sin against the Holy Spirit, and an offence against Natural Law. The authorities first instituted systems of surveillance of these Indian ritual suicides, but by the mid-nineteenth century had come to forbid them absolutely.

A much more public assault on Hindu death custom was mounted in the 1820s by the Baptist missionaries of Bengal against the so-called '*ghāt* murders'.[60] This practice involved carrying to riverside ghāts (sometimes the burning grounds themselves) people who were thought to be terminally ill. Lacking food, water and attention, these sufferers

passed quickly to the realms of Yama. It is probable, as the missionaries asserted, that such cases of exposure sometimes represented wilful manslaughter by relations who were anxious to get their hands on an inheritance. The missionaries did indeed nurse some of these people back to life.[61] But 'ghāt murder' was not the result of some peculiar viciousness in the Hindu character. Dying people were a desperate liability to a Hindu household since a death inside the house would require expensive and lengthy rites of purification, and death on a bed might expose the family to malignant spiritual visitation. Also, as we have seen, Hindu culture defined death in a different way from the West: continued activity of brain or heart was not necessarily of great significance. Nevertheless, the missionaries managed to have legislation passed which inaugurated formal policing of the ghāts and forbade the exposure there of persons considered living according to the tenets of western physiology.

By far the most publicized and bitter dispute about Hindu death ritual, however, concerned the notorious 'suttee' or sati, the burning of widows with their dead husbands.[62] Despite the revulsion of the missionaries and many of their own officers, the British authorities trod much more carefully here because the practice had some foundation in the Hindu lawbooks. Thus says the lawgiver Brihispati in a macabre and evocative simile: 'In the same manner as a snake-catcher drags a snake from his hole, so does a woman who burns herself draw her husband out of hell; and she afterwards resides with him in heaven.'[63]

Here then, one encounters the Hindu theme of sacrifice in its most dramatic form. Self-sacrifice is the ultimate form of sacrifice to deities, and according to some texts, efficacious against a vast weight of accumulated evil. But since a man's wife is literally one flesh with him, widow sacrifice has the same value in assuring salvation. To Europeans it was no more than a grisly form of murder.

From 1815 onwards, the authorities implemented a rudimentary system of policing satis in order to ensure that they were at least carried out in conformity with the scriptures. Widows could not be forced onto the funeral pyre, they had to be over the age of puberty, and they could not be tending young children—though the definition of 'child' was in doubt. By licensing satis in this way, the government hoped to 'confine those sacrifices within as narrow bounds as the rules for their guidance would permit'.[64] But during the 1820s, the growing pamphlet campaign by missionary writers in India and Britain gradually built up public opinion against the practice. Finally, with Regulation XVII of 1829, the Governor-General, Lord Bentinck, had sati banned throughout British India on

his personal initiative.[65] It flickered on spasmodically in the Indian states and in remote rural areas until the end of the century.

Many impassioned speeches were made about sati and full-length studies of this great victory of imperial reform continued to appear until as late as in Edward Thompson's work of 1928. What is striking, however, is quite how limited the numbers of satis were. Between 1817 and 1827, as few as 4323[66] were reported for a total population of about 160 million for the whole of British India. The practice was very largely confined to Bengal, and in particular, to the environs of Calcutta. Between 1815 and 1820, the annual average for the Presidencies of Bombay and Madras was under fifty. In fact, the great concern with which the British regarded sati reflected a more general movement of Anglo-Indian opinion, rather than its incidence or statistical significance. At the end of the eighteenth century, the regard for Asian civilization which derived from the Enlightenment still prevailed. Commentators were shocked by the fate of individual widows, but did not translate their revulsion into a general attack on Hinduism. By 1820, the mood had changed. Sati was simply the most obvious manifestation of the universal degradation, barbarity and corruption of Hinduism which was at that very moment on the point of dissolution before the advancing tide of Christianity. The attack on sati also implied a rejection of the 'Hindooisation' of the officials who had countenanced it for so long,[67] especially those who opposed the anglicization of education and the general missionary assault on Indian culture. Again, sati was seen as irrefutable justification for the continued British presence in India. Edward Thompson echoed a long tradition of nineteenth-century attitudes when he wrote: 'Such things as suttee kept back Indian political progress by many years; until the rite was abolished even a beginning in self-government was impossible.'[68]

The British obsession with sati was boundless. Thousands of pages of parliamentary papers were given up to 4000 immolations while the mortality of millions from disease and starvation was mentioned only incidentally—sometimes only because it tended indirectly to increase the number of widows performing the 'horrid act'. The colonial state was prodded into action on a matter which bore on natural morality but mortality which derived from the working of the grain market was treated as a law of nature, in no way amenable to intervention by the state.

One reason for the wave of revulsion amongst the British was sati's notorious prevalence around Calcutta itself. For here 'we find the Hindoo superstition in its most degraded and darkest state, in the very

part of our Empire, where the influence of our manners must first be felt and to which we must first look for the dawn of morality and civilisation".[69] In fact, the geography of nineteenth-century sati marks it out as a reinvented tradition: it had little connection, for instance, with the heroic self-immolation of the widows of dead Rajput warriors in the great medieval campaigns against the Muslims, though the scriptural authority may have been the same.[70] But neither contemporaries nor more recent commentators have been able to provide convincing arguments as to why certain groups of Bengalis carried out the rite so much more frequently than others. A number of partial explanations can be presented. First, there is the *cui bono* argument which holds that sati's particular prominence in Bengal was a result of the considerable support promised to widows in the Dayabhaga (as opposed to the Mitakshara) school of law. The Dayabhaga school it can be argued, gave the widow a much greater lien on the property of the deceased for support, though it was not favourable to inheritance by females. This might have encouraged heirs to do away with widows or to pressurize them into suicide. The argument may explain the numbers of satis in Bengal by comparison with other parts of India, but it hardly explains the great variations of incidence between the different districts and cities of Bengal.

Another explanation relates to the religious beliefs of the population. Sati, it was argued, can be connected with the worship of the goddess Kali, a terrible deity who symbolized the destructive forces that were necessary for ultimate re-creation, and demanded constant animal sacrifice.[71] This was certainly the view of Ram Mohun Roy, the Bengali deist reformer, whose personal opposition to sati gave the missionaries an important Indian ally.[72] Certainly, sati was rare where Islam and less sanguinary Hindu sects were prominent. It was, for instance, practised very little in Dacca and Murshidabad districts where popular Hinduism had early been influenced by the presence of Muslim sufi saints. As one approached Delhi, the centre of Muslim India, it almost died out and only revived in the Punjab where the militant Sikh Khalsa had inaugurated a consciously anti-Islamic revival in the eighteenth century.[73] Similarly, the centres of the more pacific Vaishnavite branch of Hinduism which preached against the taking of life, and even Benares (which though a Shaivite centre, also supported a Tantric tradition aiming at the immortality of a 'perfect body') recorded very few satis. Yet this line of argument seems incomplete. Many parts of India saw the worship of sanguinary female deities but were not associated with widow burning, while on the contrary, Nadia in Bengal was both a major Vaishnavite centre and a notorious focus of sati.

Finally, it is interesting to speculate on some of the sociological origins of sati. A scrutiny of the caste and distribution of recorded satis shows that the overwhelming number were Brahmins or widows from artisan and entrepreneurial castes. The practice was also very common in the heavily Brahmin Rahti tract of West Bengal. In a district like Birbhum where the major landholders were not high caste and tribal influences were still strong, very few instances were recorded.[74] Widow burning among Brahmins appears to be closely related to matters of status.[75] Since a widow was perceived almost literally to be part of her husband's body, her presence in a household raised questions of pollution; she was in effect, in a 'liminal' and dangerous state. The highest castes would only tolerate a widow who practised extreme asceticism. When the lower castes pressed for higher ritual status, they often forced widows into perpetual mourning. They also forbade widow remarriage which was regarded as impure, since man was in effect using the physical leavings of another. Sati, like hypergamy and the observation of extreme ritual purity, then, was one of the techniques by which Brahmin families sought to maintain a social and ritual supremacy. Likewise it may be that those caste groups, like the merchant and Kayasth (writer) castes which were consciously seeking to raise their ritual status, might occasionally have encouraged sati in an attempt to associate themselves with Brahmins and the injunctions of the sacred texts; such castes were also well represented among satis.[76]

Hindu Reform Movements and Rituals of Death, 1820–80

Perhaps the most significant aspect of the whole missionary and official onslaught against 'depraved Hindoo customs' was the manner in which it galvanized Bengali opinion to a reassessment of its own religious practice, and gave new life to debates on the authority of scripture and the validity of ritual which were deeply embedded in the historical tradition. The government's abolition of sati itself provoked a response from a group of more conservative reformers who deplored official intervention in custom and formed themselves into the Dharma Sabha (Religious Association). To this body, which admitted the need for change and yet glorified Hindu tradition, some historians have sought to trace back the origin of the Indian nationalist movement.[77]

The movement for change among Bengali Hindus had, in fact, preceded the sati controversy for some years. Debate between Vaishnavites and Shaivites had been fierce towards the end of the eighteenth century.[78] The key figure of the early nineteenth century was to be Ram Mohun Roy, a Brahmin government servant. Roy had begun to rebel

against ritualism while living in Benares, but exposure to Christian and particularly Unitarian ideas had forged this awareness into a coherent set of reform prescriptions in the years before 1820. His ferocious opposition to sati and the infanticide of female children was only part of a frontal assault on the validity of ritual as a way to salvation which found little to favour in the ordinary rites of shraddha either.

Ram Mohun Roy was a monotheist who based his ideas on the later books of the classical Sanskrit tradition, and in particular, on the Upanishads. He was also heavily influenced by the thought of the south Indian teacher Shankaracharya, who had flourished in the eighth century AD.[79] In his system, Shankaracharya had retained ritual as an indirect but significant path by which the majority could attain salvation. There were three paths: the path of ritualistic works (*karma mārga*), the path of devotion (bhakti mārga) and the path of direct knowledge (*gyāna mārga*). However, according to him, only a tiny elite of people, purified through many rebirths, had the necessary spiritual elevation to aspire to the latter. For the majority, ritual and devotion were appropriate means for purification and preparation. Shankaracharya was neatly able to combine his monistic high philosophy with a justification for Brahminism and ritual.

Ram Mohun's refurbished nineteenth-century Vedantism differed from Shankaracharya's on certain philosophical points, but his most radical contention for practical religion was that ordinary people also 'were capable of adoring the Supreme Being without the puerile practice of having resort to visible objects' (i.e. idols and ritual). This 'puerile practice' was suitable to 'the unhappy agitation and wavering of an idolater on the approach of death' because he was unable to arrange the performance of shrāddha, as an example 'which should make men reflect seriously on the miserable consequences of fixing their minds on any other objects of adoration but the one Supreme Being'.[80] Shraddha then was not so much pernicious, as the later revivalists thought, but irrelevant. God might assign men to another body after rebirth, just as Christians thought that the soul would again be clothed with flesh at the Last Trump, but on this body God would bestow the 'consequences of its good and evil works' in the past life.[81] Death rituals practised by heirs and successors could not affect the outcome either way. Ram Mohun's beliefs caused his followers in the Brahmo Samaj (Deist Society) to reduce death ritual to little more than a ceremony of commemoration. While the Samaj itself attracted only a small proportion of the Bengali intelligentsia, who were often at odds with orthodox society, this radical

attitude to tradition brought the issue to the forefront of the debate not only among the traditionalists, but also among other more widespread heterodox movements.

In fact the Brahmo Samaj never managed to wash away the charge of anglicization and crypto-Christianity. Its refined sensibilities and eclecticism were unable to touch the deeper forces of cultural pride, even chauvinism which were to prove the driving force behind modern Hindu revivalism and tinge the ideology of Indian nationalism. This role was filled more successfully by the Arya Samaj (Aryan Association) which from small beginnings in the Punjab in the 1870s grew to become the most celebrated of the movements of new Hinduism.[82] Essentially a purification movement, the Samaj sought to remove from Hindu belief and practice all elements which could not be traced to the most ancient of the classical texts, the Vedas. Its main target was Brahminical ritual which it saw as an alien accretion on 'pure' Aryan religion. This attack broadened into a rejection of the ritual and social domination of Brahmins and on the modern form of the caste system itself.[83] According to the Aryas, caste was instituted in accordance with the 'merit and capability' of individuals. And since these varied, there could be no justification for inherited caste status. Instead individuals should be ascribed to putative castes in the course of their own lifetime. Thus learned and pure men should 'become' Brahmins, warlike men Kshatriyas, and so on.

The Aryan message of revival was propagated throughout north India and especially in the cultural frontier zone of the Punjab where there had been generations of conflict between Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism; it was the faith of vigorous entrepreneurs, young literati and, latterly, of independent peasant farmers. Its methods reflected the transformation of its founder, Swami Dayananda, from a traditional wandering holy man teaching in Sanskrit and engaging in formal debates with local Brahmins, to a 'reformer' who spoke in Hindi, wore western dress, and encouraged pamphlet warfare and railway tours. Aryas were active missionaries in the western sense and they used forms of congregational worship adapted from Christian and Muslim sources. Yet Vedic fundamentalism and the radical attack on hierarchy were themselves recessive features within the Hindu tradition. Dayananda owed as much to traditional Brahminical teaching as to the Brahmo Samaj of Bengal in formulating his new creed. Hindu reform was vigorously nudged by the impact of the West, but its lines of direction were already laid out.

Funeral practice and shrāddha ritual inevitably attracted the hostility of the Aryan reformers. No trace of elaborate funerary forms can be found in the first books of the Vedas; worse, the practice itself helped to confirm the dominance of the Brahmins and the perversion of true religion. In the case of funeral practice, Dayananda and his followers mounted a straightforward campaign to reinstitute the simple methods of burning enjoined in the ancient texts. Dayananda's major work *Satyāratha Prakasha* (The Light of Truth) reiterates the ideal depth of the cremation trench, the quantities of sandalwood required for the pyre, the amounts of saffron and clarified butter (two ritual substances) to be used in the burning, and the nature of the hymns to be chanted.[84] Even these simple instructions, however, implied a covert attack on hierarchy. It had become the practice to reserve the use of sandalwood and clarified butter for the higher castes. Dayananda insisted that sandalwood should be used for all and that 'however poor the deceased, in no case should less than 40 pounds of clarified butter be used in cremating the body'. This vastly expensive commodity should be procured 'by begging or as a gift from his caste people . . . or from Government, if need be'.[85] Here Dayananda was insinuating another of his favourite themes: that true religion could only subsist in the context of a Hindu state. It was obviously absurd to expect the British Government to spend large sums of money in the provision of clarified butter for funerals.

The question of death and cremation also illustrated the Aryas' new and aggressive attitude to Islam and Christianity. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body reinforced the insistence on burial of the dead, but the Aryas vigorously rejected this. Bodily substance was illusion and fragmented back into its basic particles, so the dead could not be raised incorruptible. Besides, burial was degrading. How, for instance, could it be compatible with the Christian idea of love? 'How can it be an act of love on your part to throw earth, bricks, stones, lime and other things, on his [the deceased's] eyes, mouth, chest, and other parts of the body?'[86] More than this, burial was an insanitary method of disposing of the dead 'because the decomposition of dead bodies sets in, which pollutes the air which in its turn give rise to disease'. Here we have an interesting example of the manner in which revived Hinduism employed the rhetoric of classical theological debate and modern rationalism to reinforce each other. Burial 'polluted the air', 'rendered useless acres of agricultural land', 'caused fear to the timid from the sight of graves' (a psychological argument here), and insulted the dead. But the concept of the insanitary is highly ambiguous. On the one hand, Dayananda has

assimilated very recent western medical ideas about the origin of disease, but on the other hand, he is affirming a classical Sanskritic notion of the nature of matter, and an injunction against ritually polluting air and earth which are regarded as pure substances.

The blunt notions of Dayananda and other Arya leaders on the nature and object of shrāddha ceremonies also throw light on the modification of the Hindu tradition they envisaged. Above all other orthodox rituals, it expressed the essential notion of hereditable purity and impurity which underpinned the caste system itself. Arya preachers made a point of belabouring shrāddha and major classical debates on the issue (*shastrārthas*) were held in Lahore in 1878, in Wazirabad in 1896,[87] and in Moradabad in 1898. The object of the Aryas was to reduce the ritual to a mere feast of commemoration, which is what they considered the practice of Vedic times to have been.[88] According to them, the spirits of the ancestors did not physically share in the ritual feast. Indeed, since their merit was assured by acts in their individual life, such rituals could not help them to acquire a more acceptable regeneration or a more rapid transition to Heaven. The chain of hereditable caste would thus be broken because a man's status in the afterlife could not be modified by the ritual actions of his family, howsoever pure and pious they might be. The printing presses of the Punjab and United Provinces rolled out contributions to this debate throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century. But direct Vedic authorities were not the only ones invoked. In a manner typical of Victorian Indian thought, the Aryas at the debate in Wazirabad in 1896 attempted to enlist on their side the weighty name of Friedrich Max Müller, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford, who was regarded as the leading orientalist of the period. Max Müller tactfully refrained from direct polemic but added to Arya Vedic fundamentalism an argument derived from contemporary European notions of 'natural religion'. According to him, ancestor worship was a 'natural' consequence of the universal fear of the dead.[89] The shrāddha ceremony in the Vedas had originated, however, as no more than a feast in honour of the living relatives. Again, the Aryas had brought western 'scientific' thought to the aid of indigenous controversy.

Quite apart from direct theological objections, the Arya publicists sought to purify shrāddha rites on other grounds also. First, it was not only the ideology but the practice of the ceremonies which helped to maintain the false caste hierarchy. The position of the celebrants, the length of the ceremonies and the rank of the specialists employed all

helped to designate and order castes. By reducing funerary ritual to a few simple and uniform acts, a further public manifestation of hierarchy would be removed. This would also undermine the economic basis of much of the priestly class itself, particularly the 'filthy, cheating, fraudulent wretches' of Gaya, Benares and other holy places with whom Dayananda had had early and abrasive encounters. Since to Aryas only pure actions with pure consequences could bring salvation, the whole panoply of ritual activity there brought no benefit—in fact, brought demerit to millions of participants:

> Hundreds of thousands of Rupees are given away in charity to the priests for the good and happiness of the *manes*. These priests of Gaya waste all this money in prostitution and other sinful practices. If this be the merit of offering cakes to the *manes* at Gaya, why can Gaya not be freed from sins like prostitution?[90]

Faced with 'evidence' from the orthodox that the spirits of the dead actually appeared and consumed the cakes of the sacrifice, Dayananda contemptuously dismissed it as trickery. What happened, he said, was that the priests got a man to hide in a specially prepared pit near the point of oblation. When the cakes were presented, this man would surreptitiously help himself to them and have a good meal in his underground hiding place.

At first sight this denunciation of funerary specialists for dishonesty and uncleanliness reads like a reaction to the western critique of Hinduism. But it also had deep roots in indigenous traditions and sensibilities. Funerary and shrāddha priests had always occupied a low position amongst Brahmins. Popularly they were seen as manifestations of the spirits they served, not only unclean but also inauspicious.[91] According to the Sanskrit scholar, J.C. Heesterman,[92] at sacrifice in Hinduism the sacrificer was deemed to be reborn, transferring to the priest the odium of his own death and impurity. Thus the purification and even abolition of the funerary priesthood could be justified by an appeal to one element of the religious tradition itself.

A final Arya objection to shrāddha practice sprang from ideas about domestic and political economy. Both marriage feasts and oblations to the dead had become the occasion for notable displays of piety. Expensive rituals were common among poorer people of high caste who needed to maintain their local status, and were reputed to be the origin of much debt and forced land sales. Opposition to conspicuous ritual expenditure had indigenous roots among Vaishnavite devotional reformers. Shaivism

also had an ascetic and restrained aspect. At the same time, British revenue officers who deplored rural indebtedness and moral crusaders who abhorred its alleged consequence, female infanticide, came together after the 1840s in a common assault on expensive *rites de passage*. By the 1870s, Aryas and other Indian social reformers had taken up the challenge and mounted a widespread campaign through newspapers and caste associations to limit these practices. Ideal economy budgets for both marriage and shrāddha were circulated by a number of publicists.

The influence of Arya opposition to death rites was considerable. In 1900, there were barely one million people who described themselves as Aryas for the purposes of the census, but the ripples of controversy went far beyond them. In particular, their attitudes had a distinct impact on the various neo-orthodox movements which rose up in opposition to them, especially the *sanātan dharma sabhās* (societies for ancient religion) which developed in north India in the 1880s,[93] and the contemporary Bengali devotional movements which mixed ecstatic worship with cultural revivalism. It was unlikely that the majority of Hindus would be prepared to abandon the whole of their scriptural tradition since the Vedas. And besides its toughness and resilience as a social system, caste also had its defenders as a moral ordering of mankind. The sanātan dharma sabhās were more a defensive movement by orthodoxy, then, than purification movements in their own right. They appealed indeed to the lower sections of Brahmin society which had little connection with the extreme ritualism of the holy cities, and yet wished to guard the social position of the priestly class against its opponents. The aim of the *sanātan dharmis* was to frustrate the radicals by reforming Brahminical practice from inside. They were prepared to use modern methods of proselytization, to distribute the sacred books to the lower castes,[94] something which was frowned upon by unregenerate orthodoxy, and to 'reconvert' apostate Muslims, Sikhs and Arya Samajis. Their position on death ritual was, therefore, ambiguous. Discriminations of caste could not be abandoned, but some of the intricacy, cost and superstition of the rituals had to be removed.[95] Sanātan dharmis were also prominent in the various associations which developed after 1870 to protect and regulate the holy places, such as the Allahabad Hindu Samaj (society) and the Benares People's Association. Members sought to discipline the bodies of shrāddha priests, to compromise their disputes over clients, and to promote commercial morality and sanitation.

The late-nineteenth-century neo-traditionalist revivalist leaders of

Bengal, such as Swami Vivekananda, also adopted positions which contributed to the change of mood among the orthodox. Mixing devotional-ism with a highly sensitive cultural nationalism, Vivekananda called ritual 'the kindergarten of all religions'. But because they were part of India's heritage, customs such as shrāddha should not be abandoned to placate westerners, let alone the Brahmos and Aryas. All the same, modification and simplification were desirable, and 'new rituals' should be developed to express the spirit of the age.[96]

The New India: Cleanliness, Self-restraint and Thrift, 1880–

The attitude of the new Indian elites to death ritual was also modified by a partial adoption of western notions of sanitation, public health, and civic responsibility. From the 1860s the British authorities had become somewhat more vigorous in promoting measures of medical and sanitary reform. Control of burning ghāts and Muslim burial grounds seemed particularly important during periods of epidemic. As the price of firewood rose, the poor were less and less able to afford the cost of cremation and the services of attendant Doms. In many cases only the ritually impure parts of the body—especially the mouth—were burnt, and the corpse was simply thrown into the River Ganges, which was anyway considered an unequalled purifying agent. This may have given great joy to Rudyard Kipling's English subalterns who made a grand game of potting at the corpses as they floated down river, but it recommended itself less to the tough, and generally Scottish, breed of Medical Officers and Surgeons-Major who began to appear in India after the Mutiny. The need to protect Hindu holy places from the intervention of these energetic foreigners impelled further numbers of orthodox Hindus into public associations which could regulate practice at the ghāts. The desire to retain charge of pilgrimage centres, bathing and burning places or burial grounds was an important, and little recognized, force behind the growth of voluntary associations in late-nineteenth-century India. In 1912, for instance, the Allahabad Seva Samiti (Service Club) went so far as to hire a champion swimmer to save drowning pilgrims and provide a boat to release and dispose of floating corpses which had got caught in midstream. An attempt was also made to cull the gargantuan alligators which waited hopefully on the riverside.[97]

Over the last hundred years, therefore, the funerary practices of even the most orthodox Hindu family have been simplified, standardized and

reduced in cost and time-scale. Economy and other material changes have played a considerable part in speeding the decline of the old customs.[98] For instance, the gradual destruction of north India's forests has made the acquisition of scented wood more difficult. Fewer married women are now cremated in the costly red embroidered Banarsi sari, and white silk saris for widows are no longer obligatory. The decline of the old landed and princely families has removed some of the greatest benefactors of the holy places from the scene, and after the Depression of the 1930s, the level of general donations declined, never to revive. Also, the greater physical mobility of the population reduced the role of the funeral rituals as an *ad hoc* council and affirmation of the solidarity of the clan brotherhood. As the tie between the lineage and its area of land control broke down, and more family members travelled outside the locality or even outside the country for employment, it proved increasingly difficult to assemble the relations to seven degrees. Thus Kayasth (writer caste) families in the United Provinces reduced the length of shrāddha rites from forty days to thirteen in the course of the last century. This was ostensibly because brethren in government service were unable to take sufficiently long leave. But the traditional desire to raise caste status must also have played its part here. As we have seen, the lower the caste, the longer the rituals, and in the eighteenth-century Kayasths in this region had evidently been ranked quite low.

Changes of attitude converged with these material incentives to simplicity. Very close observance of caste ranking disappeared at the burning ghāts as it disappeared in public transport and on the main roads. Differentials of caste continued to be observed, but without the great rigour of the past. Women and children began to appear at the burning ghāts in much greater numbers from the beginning of the twentieth century and the concept of shrāddha as a feast of commemoration rather than as the actual embodiment of the soul in a new body appears to have gained currency even amongst those who venerate all the gods of the pantheon and exercise ritual purity. One particular instance of changing attitudes is the erosion of the distinction between 'unnatural' and 'natural' death following the spread of the western idea that all death is in some sense the result of disease. Previously, children or people who died from rotting diseases and had not therefore completed their life cycle had been buried rather than cremated. But in more recent times, even small children and lepers have been cremated in the towns.

After 1920 a further voice was added to those who denounced the cost

and intricacy of death rituals. M.K. Gandhi's attitude to religion was coloured by a personal revulsion against the 'uncleanliness' which he with his one western eye saw in traditional India's holy places.[99] Dirt was a visible manifestation of the pilgrims' 'absent-mindedness, hypocrisy and solvenliness'. Inner cleanliness and outer cleanliness, individual and national purity in must go hand in hand. The idea that death ceremonies are a public, even national act, reinforced an innate hostility to elaborate ritual which derived from his western Indian merchant background. He doubted that shrāddha had any effect on the moral fate of the spirit of the deceased,[100] let alone on its physical form. Shraddha was even of dubious benefit to celebrants and relatives since they were only helping to perpetuate the spirit's cravings for the attachments of its past life. Gandhi's objections, then, derived not from rationalism but from his austere view of karma and moral retribution. He urged his own bereaved friends and relatives to recite prayers and offer fruits only after funerals. Spinning homespun thread was also suggested: Gandhi saw in the spinning wheel a symbol of both individual and national salvation.

That all ritual and familial actions must be judged by national standards was a theme that Gandhi also emphasized in his strong opposition to the elaborate funeral feasts for caste-fellows and Brahmins which were often held on the eleventh day after death. In 1930, for instance, he strongly supported some young men in western India who had organized a boycott against a lavish funeral feast.[101] The money thus wasted should have been given to the poor, he considered. We see here the convergence of the tradition of hostility to lavish 'tribal' display with the more recent idea that Indians had duties to the nation which overrode the demands of kin and clan. This itself was a complex response to the intervention of the colonial state and its apologists in some corners of the ritual arena.

Conclusion

The history of death rituals in India is difficult to organize into clear epochs. Nearly all the elements of practice and belief which are prevalent in modern India among high-caste and urban people were explicit in the great corpus of Puranic literature, and many can be traced back even earlier. What happened was a series of changes of emphasis rather than a succession of doctrinal and social breaks in funerary institutions and attitudes to death, such as is supposed to have characterized the history of Europe. Over the long term, the most characteristic change in the form of funerary ritual has been the slow assimilation of folk practices,

in which the propitiation of spirits was the dominant purpose, to the orthodox Brahminical rite of shrāddha in which both living and dead were thought to acquire spiritual benefit. Yet even amongst the orthodox and high caste, shrāddha and the ceremonies connected with it have been ambiguous. There remained a strong 'tribal' element which was concerned with the succouring and 'creation' of ancestors, the confirming of the clan and the glorification of genealogy through conspicuous feasting, gifting and pilgrimage. On the other hand, there was the anti-ritualistic and philosophical interpretation of shrāddha which insisted on simplicity and held ritual to be largely irrelevant to the fate of the dead soul which was predetermined by the accumulated weight of good and evil actions in past incarnations.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the 'tribal' aspect remained strong as new regional rulers sought to glorify their lineages and build up the holy cities which were favoured locations for shrāddha. The very wealth and 'corruption' of orthodox ritual, however, kept alive movements of religious teaching which rejected ritual as a way to salvation. In the colonial period, the reaction to Christianity and western notions of morality indirectly strengthened the part of tradition which considered that funerary rites should be more in the nature of an austere sacrifice of commemoration. The growth of towns, economic pressures and programmes of caste reform have tended to point in the same direction.

While the interpretation of the meaning of rituals among the Hindu elites has shifted over time, there has also been a subtle change in the role of funerary rituals as indeed of other rituals in society at large. Until recent generations, ritual played a positive role in forming the Indian social order; it did not simply 'reflect' economic and social changes outside. We have seen how in the Dayabhaga school of law the ritual rules of shrāddha were used to determine inheritance rather than vice versa. In the eighteenth century, if not later, doubts about the identity of an heir could be resolved in the ritual arena when the identity of the chief sacrificer at the funeral was known. The ritual circle remained a dangerous place in which statuses could be created or compromised. Again, the priests of the holy places actively enhanced the prestige of their seats and elaborated rites which could affect the disposition of resources in society at large.

In recent generations, however, the potency of events in ritual arenas to alter the status or position in the world has diminished, though it continues to remain strong in the villages. Inheritance legislation has swept away the ritual rules of Dayabhaga law; inheritance and adoption are

decided by legal instruments. The priestly establishment at the holy places, now diminished, has ceased actively to build clienteles and has succumbed to the intervention of purely commercial middlemen. We might say that there has been a general progression from ritual to ceremony. Ritual affects statuses in the outside world; ceremony merely confirms them.[102] This change appears to have occurred in European societies also and it has manifested itself in events as diverse as coronations, civic festivals and wakes for the dead. It is not that Indian, or even European society, has necessarily become more 'rational'. It is simply that the areas in which ritual performance could substantively modify the conduct of social life have been steadily reduced by the growth of a whole range of more specialized institutions connected with the state. Organs as diverse as the registrar's office, the lawcourts and the newspapers have come to resolve those conflicts which might once have been played out in the ritual circle.

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91. J. Parry, 'Ghosts, Greed and Sin. The Occupational Identity of the Benares Funeral Priests', *Man*, XV, 1980, pp. 88–111.
92. J.C. Heesterman, 'Brahmin, Ritual and Renouncer', *Wiener Zeitschrift f. die Kunde S.U.O. Asiens*, VIII, 1964, pp. 1–31.
93. Farquhar, *Religious Movements*, pp. 157–73.
94. Ibid., p. 316.
95. See, e.g., *Brāhman Sarvāswa* (Allahabad), I-IV, 1891–93.
96. S.P. Basu and S.B. Ghosh (eds), *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers* (Calcutta, 1969), cites *Madras Mail*, 6 February 1897.
97. *Report of the Sewa Samiti, 1913* (Allahabad, 1913), unpag., misc. collection of Sir Sunder Lal Dave, Allahabad.
98. The following observations are based on interviews carried out in north India and England, 1979–80. I am particularly grateful to T.N. Sharma of the Oriental Faculty, Cambridge for his valuable information. It is much more difficult, of course, to measure *attitudes* to death, but Farquhar, *Modern Religious Movements*, p. 432, notes as early as in 1909 that 'educated Indians' of that time found it difficult to believe that the ancestral spirit actually ate the sustenance offered in shrāddha.

99. Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, pp. 241–3.
100. *Collected Works of Mahātma Gandhi*, XXX (Delhi, 1968), p. 321. 'If it [shraddha] has any spiritual utility, I do not know it. I do not understand too how a departed person is benefited through shraddha.'
101. *Collected Works*, XXXVI (Delhi, 1970), pp. 55–6.
102. Cf. B.S. Cohn, 'Honour and Honours', unpublished paper presented to the SSRC Conference on Indian Social and Economic History, Cambridge, 1976.

6

The Origins of Swadeshi (Home Industry): Cloth and Indian Society, 1700–1930*

After 1905, the import of British-made cloth into India and the ensuing destruction of Indian handicraft production became the key theme of Indian nationalism. In the hands first of Bengali leaders and later of Mahatma Gandhi and his supporters, the need to support swadeshi (home) industries and boycott foreign goods was woven through with notions of neighbourliness, patriotism, purity, and sacrifice, all of which provided unifying ideologies more powerful than any single call for

*From Arjun Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things. Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 285–321. The aim of Appadurai's volume was to reconceptualize the relations between material objects and social groups in such a way as to show that 'things' had powerful social personae and were active rather than simply passive forces in the construction of social life. This chapter tries to show that transactions in cloth in Indian society were related to and constituted part of discourses of power, purity and legitimacy. It could be argued, in fact, that the patronage by kings and great men of the products of particular groups of handicraft workers was a material dimension of the 'discourse of old patriotism' discussed in the earlier chapters. The ethical literature treated it as such. Moreover, despite the massive erosion of handicraft production in nineteenth-century India as a consequence of the demise of European and princely purchases of indigenous cloth and the rise of manufactured imports, this 'discourse of things' remained a living tradition at the end of the nineteenth century because the lower end of the market for cloth was still dominated by Indian artisan production (see Tirthankar Roy, ed., *Cloth and Commerce. Textiles in Colonial India*, Delhi, 1996). The ideals of Gandhian nationalism and the movement to promote *khadi* (homespun cloth), therefore, built upon an 'old' and not an 'invented' tradition in Hobsbawm's sense. An important addition to the literature on this topic is Emma Tarlo, *Clothing Matters. Dress and Identity in India* (London, 1996).

This paper benefited greatly from the general seminar discussion in Philadelphia but particularly from the comments of Arjun Appadurai, David Ludden, Gyan

political representation or independence. The destruction of indigenous weaving and the influx of foreign cloth became visible, material symbols for nationalists, comparable to those represented in other societies by literary or legendary motifs: 'loss of country' in Indochina and China, the coming of the Just King in Indonesia, or the notion of the ending of Babylonian Exile in Caribbean and African societies.[1]

That cloth could evoke such powerful symbols of community and right conduct was due to the important role cloth and clothes played in Indian society—not merely in fixing and symbolizing social and political statuses, but in transmitting holiness, purity and pollution. This essay seeks first to elucidate these roles of cloth in pre-colonial society and then to show how they were transformed in the colonial period. In doing so, the essay uncovers some special features of the role and meaning of commodities in Indian society over the last three hundred years. Recent studies of the rise of capitalism through 'commodization' of produce and labour have tended to assume an evolutionary or even dialectical development through time.[2] Commodities invested with the 'spirit' of gift exchange, products that 'seem to embody the social milieu from which they came', are progressively divested of value to become impersonal things whose value is allocated only through the market. Divine power and the devil are both separated from daily life; relics and talismans lose their worth. The mental and moral conditions of capitalism are established alongside its material manifestations. What is striking about India over these centuries, however, is that development in the external forms of proto-capitalism (credit, capital, markets)[3] was not matched by an equivalent development of mentalities. The spirit of the gift, the perception of 'evil' (here pollution), continued to adhere to products that were circulated within a fully developed market system. That this should have been so reflects the nature of the specific form of commercialization that occurred in the economy of pre-colonial India. The labile expansion of a cash economy tended to bring 'shares' in the royal rights of great and little kingdoms into the cash nexus. It did not, however, even under nineteenth-century colonialism, dissolve the

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social relations of dominance that arose from the interplay between the norms of caste and the structure of the petty local kingdoms.

What follows is an attempt at the collective biography of cloth in India over time. In the first section, the broad characteristics of the Indian view of cloth as a thing that can transmit spirit and substance is sketched out. The essay then goes on to show how the meaning and function of transactions in cloth changed in response to general political and economic trends. In the long view, this is a study of commoditization, but only of partial commoditization. For if slavery was an example of how persons could be made 'things', the history of cloth in India also shows how things could retain the quality of the people who fashioned and exchanged them, even in a fully monetized economy.

CLOTH IN INDIAN SOCIETY: AN OVERVIEW

Symbol, Talisman, and Pledge

Transactions in cloth and the donning of new cloth or clothes attended every major life-cycle ritual in pre-industrial Indian society. Cloth transactions also took place during worship and in the creation or confirmation of political alliances.[4] We can distinguish three basic uses of cloth in the social process, which often in practice overlap: first, its use in symbolizing status or in recording changes of status; second, its magical or 'transformative' use, in which the moral and physical being of the wearer/recipient was perceived to be actually changed by the innate qualities of the cloth or the spirit and substance it conveyed; third, its use as a pledge of future protection. These various uses and the meanings attached to them affected not only the social and economic position of donor and recipient, but also the status of the various artisans and service communities that encountered the commodity cloth as it passed from production into social use.

The use of cloth and clothes to symbolize social status or to change it is, of course, common to all societies, though the complexity of the Indian social order imparts unusual variety to the symbolism of nakedness and dress. But beyond this, cloth as a transactional medium was conceived as a unique conveyor of spirit and substance, holy, strengthening or polluting. Thus, cloth of different textures, colours, or origins could do more than simply impart information in society, it could change the moral and physical substance of the individual. Two ideas are relevant here. First, cloth was porous, dense and intertwining, and could thus absorb and retain spirit/substance for many years. As an artifact,

cloth of cotton, wool or silk could not approach the especially powerful transformative capacity of food,[5] but, on the other hand, it lasted longer than food, could travel over longer distances, and was much less 'hard' and neutral than wood or metals. Second, Indians seem widely to have regarded the individual person as a peculiarly volatile combination of 'bio-moral' substances, as an amalgamation of colours, qualities and textures with each his own spirit. In Hindu chemistry and physiology, for instance, it seems that colour was not merely an accident of matter as in the Aristotelian tradition, but an independent manifestation of the spirit that goes to make up, say, a red cloth.[6] Thus, the spirit of red cloth, or redness can combine with the moral substance of a particular person and transform it. For this reason, when a man in parts of central India smeared himself with ochre and donned red garments, he was something more than a man dressed in red; he was, in effect, a red man, that is a sorcerer.[7] His costume did not symbolize a status acquired by other means; it was an essential component of the very transformation itself. Similarly, ascetics who smeared their clothes with mud and ashes seem to have been perceived not simply as men symbolizing their social death, but actually as ash-men, as corpses. Since their bodies were therefore devoid of active biological substance, when their brains and hearts ceased to function, they were simply buried and not burned.

The qualities imputed to cloth can best be appreciated through some examples. Barren women in central India used to obtain part of the breast cloth of another, particularly fecund, woman who was pregnant. The barren woman burnt it and ate the ashes, 'thinking thereby to transfer the pregnant woman's quality of fertility to herself'.[8] Again, when a Hindu widow remarried, a risky activity at the best of times, her old clothes and ornaments were often buried outside the boundary of her second husband's village.[9] She would also put on a new set of clothes. This is because part of the spirit of her dead husband was thought to be trapped in the fabric of her old clothes and might cause trouble as a jealous and malignant ghost.

Of course, these transformative qualities of cloth were not unique to Indian society. In Islamic societies, the turbans of great teachers could transmit spirit; in medieval Christendom, cloth relics such as the Shroud of Turin were particularly venerated, while even in today's agnostic western societies, a dead man's clothes are often considered inauspicious. But in India, a person's holiness or pollution was perceived as peculiarly lambent and cloth as an especially sensitive medium. It would be hazardous to claim that all Indian societies were

critically aware of the principles of purity and pollution, but even for those that were not, transactions in cloth widely implied a pledge of future protection. In many rural communities, for instance, the gift of a man to a woman of a piece of cloth did more than simply symbolize an act of marriage: it *was* the ritual of marriage itself. In parts of the north Indian hills where poor cultivators were unable to afford whole garments, small squares of cloth were passed at the marriage ritual, and their number was a pledge of the degree of reciprocal aid owed by the bride's family to the bridegroom's. This role of cloth had deep roots in Hindu tradition. In the *Mahabharata*, for instance, the mythic female Draupadhi, under attack by enemies, was endowed by the gods with a sari that had no end. The more cloth the enemies unwrapped, the more remained to protect her virtue. A similar theme pervaded Indo-Muslim culture. According to the flowery Persian metaphor for creation and protection, 'God clothes the bosom of nature with the mantle of existence'. As God's mantle protects the creatures living beneath it, so the king protects men. Cohn has noted that the gift of dress was the essential act of homage and rule within the Mughal system of kingship, effecting the incorporation of the subject into the ruler's body. Thus, in 1857, during the Great Rebellion, the poet Ghalib berated Indians for leaving the skirt (*daman*) of their 'just' rulers, the British, and falling instead into the net (*dam*) of wickedness.[10]

Cloth and the Social Order

Here we consider the qualities of different types of cloth or clothes as they affect producers, donors and wearers. First, it is interesting to note that different fabrics, weaves and colours were considered to have distinct individual qualities.

A loose, coarse texture in cloth was often deemed to be the most porous to spirit and substance, whether holy or polluting. The looser and larger the knots, the more could be entrapped in them. One class of very loose-textured fabric was the *raksha*, used for fancy silk and braid armbands, neckties, and the like and worn on religious festivals. These fabrics were woven by a particular occupational group, the Patwas, who were deemed to be ritually superior to most other weaving castes. During the preparation of rakshas and other cloth talismans, a Brahmin was often employed to tie loose knots in the fabric. Chanting prayers all the while, the priest was able to fasten within the very knots themselves part of the spirit of various beneficent deities.[11] The loose texture of the 'sacred thread' that the high castes wore had similar qualities—it was

a trap for godliness, but at the same time it was quite vulnerable to accidental pollution. During meals, for instance, the thread was often tied around the head to avoid its pollution by contact with food. As we shall see, the porous quality of coarse homespun (khadi) became something to be prized during the nationalist movement: it seemed almost to be able to capture and retain the spirit of the land itself. But the danger was that coarse, hard-wearing fabrics of this sort could easily pick up impurities, or irritate and damage the skin; until Gandhi's time, homespun was regarded as boorish, perhaps even dirty.

For this reason, the tight, dense weave of quality fabrics was prized not only for its aesthetic refinement and market value, but also because it rejected pollution more easily. Thus, silk was a peculiarly pure substance for Hindus. For most central Indian and southern Brahmins in the nineteenth century, silk was par excellence the dress for ritual and worship, and by extension it was used in other ritualized cultural performances (musicians, for instance, commonly wear silk upper garments). Silk was considered so much purer than cotton even of the best quality that it was not necessary to wash it before ceremonial use. According to the Mitakshara law, mere exposure was sufficient for silk was 'washed by the air', itself a divine spirit.[12] But there was a certain ambiguity here, since the production of silk involved the killing of the silkworm, a potentially polluting act, and many castes were prohibited from participating in the preparation of silk thread.[13] In general, long exposure and the operations of the market were deemed to have removed the pollution of death before silk reached the final purchaser. It is intriguing to note, however, that some holy centres such as Benares did produce large quantities of a silk called *mukta*, which was made after the moth had pierced the cocoon and had escaped alive.[14] This was an inferior fabric so far as utilitarian and aesthetic value was concerned because the threads were broken, but it was much prized and commanded a high price. It was purchased by orthodox Vaishnavite Hindus and Jains (who both abhorred the taking of life) and was also considered appropriate for the ropes of sacred processional chariots and for the ritual swings used during the Krishna festival of Sawan.[15] Mukta kept many artisans and merchants in employment; it exemplifies with great clarity the danger of taking any commodity as a utilitarian given.

The conventions regarding the quality of cloth among Indian Muslims were deeply influenced by the Hindu environment, but did have different rationales, at least among the elites. Both religions had a notion of ritual purity. Ablution was an important precursor of both Muslim

and Hindu worship, and garments such as socks, which retain pollution, were to be avoided, particularly at the mosque. But in theory at least, pollution had different connotations for the two religions. For Muslims, impurity was to be avoided, not so much because it endangered 'bio-moral substance', but because (like woman's hair or narcotics) it distracted the worshipper from the free use of reason during prayer. Paradoxically, whereas Hindus were enjoined to use silk, Muslims were encouraged by the sayings of the Prophet to abjure it, on the ground that the luxurious preening of the individual to which it gave rise inhibited the worshipper from proper submission to God. The tensions between the use of silk as an adjunct to kingliness and the religious injunctions against it were quite severe in Indo-Muslim society. Firoz Shah Tughluq banned its use, but later sovereigns and learned men compromised.[16] So silk was forbidden at worship in the mosque but permissible outside it and even encouraged on the battlefield, where it was said to deflect sword cuts. Later, a cotton–silk mix called *mashru* (permitted silk) was made by weavers and spread all over India since it helped the less orthodox to look fine while conforming to the law.[17]

Colour as much as texture was an essential feature of the quality of cloth and could also modify the moral and material status of the user. The mental or natural origins of colour coding are of less importance to us here than the social categories with which it became associated. It is possible, as Pupul Jayakar suggests,[18] that the distribution of cloth colours across India represents an adjustment to the natural environment; colours were softer in the lush, subtropical regions, brighter and more varied in the harsh desert landscapes. The dominance of certain colour schemes by region may reflect the ancient boundaries of the natural substances and plants from which the dyes were produced; and the reservation of white and yellow to Brahmins and high castes may echo interdicts on relations between them and the tribal peoples who collected and processed the dyes. Be that as it may, a cultural colour code, which continues to influence village life, had already emerged by the time of the *Laws of Manu* before the beginning of the Christian era. White was associated with purity and was thus the proper colour for Brahmins and widows. Red, which evokes blood and danger, was appropriate for enhancing the persona of soldiers and powerful female essences of any sort. Soldiers wore red turbans in battle, and women wore red clothes and reddened their hands and hair during marriages or fertility festivals. According to *Ganga Smriti*, a Brahmin should wear white, Kshatriya (warrior) red, a Vaishya (mercantile person or cultivator) yellow (a colour that implies an easy, natural fecundity), and a

Shudra (menial) 'dark and dirty clothes'.[19] In so far as it is possible to recapture the meaning of these injunctions, it seems that cloth of different colours was considered to have a magical and not merely a symbolic function; it enhanced or destroyed the innate qualities in individuals. Thus, a man receiving a wrong or inappropriate gift is 'reduced to ashes like a piece of wood'. 'Evilly taken . . . gold and food destroy his longevity, land and cow his body, a horse his eye [sight], *a garment his skin*, clarified butter his energy, sesamum grains his offspring'.[20] Cloth, then, was almost literally as integral to the person as his skin.

Islamic colour conventions generally overlapped with or were penetrated by Hindu ones, but green, the Prophet's colour, acquired particular sanctity. Green banners and green awnings for mosques and saints' tombs were common, but very devout Muslims abjured the use of green for loincloths and trousers to avoid insulting, or possibly polluting, the colour. Muslims also elaborated the use of shot gold and silver fabrics in endowing or creating royalty. Gold and silver cloths for use as dowries were an obvious way of passing on stored value between generations, and symbolizing royal status for the bride and groom, who were regarded as royalty on their wedding day. But gold and silver were also credited with the power of transforming and enhancing human substance, as witness their use in various forms of traditional medicine. For Muslims, gold and silver also had a special value because of their capacity to absorb light. According to Indo-Persian philosophy, light (*nur*) was a divine quality, a visible manifestation of God's reason working in the world. Light was essential for the patterning of Islamic architecture, it preoccupied Islamic astronomy and astrology and it gave rise to an enormous taste for mirrors and shiny fabrics. 'Light' and 'mirror' became pervasive themes in Persian and Urdu literature. A king or noble who donned a cloth of gold or silver was, in effect, becoming a mirror of God, a direct transmitter of his divine light, as regal as the sun and stars, which were no more than other celestial transmitters. An early-nineteenth century Arcot chronicler is going beyond mere flattery and hyperbole when he states: 'The embroidered *khilat* [dress] of high value worn by the Nawwab [ruler] that day and also the ornaments set with jewels emitted such bright light that the world-illuminating sun felt depressed';[21] and, later, an English general at Trichinopoly was outshone like a 'star by the sun'. As at Versailles, in Indian royalty the Sun King is surrounded by his courtiers as stars. But the quality of the clothes is deemed to do more than represent the emanation of royalty. They are an aspect of it; they catch and reflect the rays of God's light.

Hitherto this section has considered some innate qualities of cloth. But even if the market were considered a neutral medium, it is important to note that the context of giving, receiving and wearing could also influence the quality of the cloth and hence the moral quality of those who come into contact with it later. A suit of clothes 'evilly taken' conveyed sin and destruction. In the same way, clothes received on particularly auspicious days or from holy hands can store their good qualities indefinitely. Village women reserved particularly auspicious saris and colours for important days, but the convention also reached the King himself. In the Emperor Akbar's court, there was a special department for receiving the shawls and dresses (*khelats*) given as tributes or pledges by different notables and regions.[22] The articles received here were graded according to their quality, the appropriateness and fineness of their colours, but also according to the time when they were received and worn. Goods received on the 'first day of the month of Fawardin' or the King's birthday had a higher rank assigned to them than pieces arriving on other days. These acquired qualities resided in the cloth until it was given to another recipient in a ritual exchange at court.

A cloth could influence the substance and spirit of the wearer, but it could also acquire qualities from him. These qualities depended on the status of the individual, but also the honour and purity of the part of the body on which it had been worn. The feet and loins were the least honourable, the head the most honourable. This accounts for the importance of the turban in Indian dress conventions. Among Hindus the turban not only protected the head, seat of the brain and of a man's semen, but was also imbued with the power of these substances. Pulling off a man's turban was indeed the gravest insult, a challenge to his rank, his reason, even his virility. Islamic notions added another layer of meaning. The turban, of course, had become a symbol of spiritual succession in the Muslim countries of the Middle East at an early date. Gravestones of the classical and early Christian period had often featured representations of the human form, but since this was forbidden by Islam, Muslims began to use the turban and hairpiece as a gravestone symbol.[23] The turban itself therefore became associated with the teacher–pupil relationship in the sufi mystical orders. A holy man's turban became a powerful carrier for his barkat, or spiritual charisma, in Indian Islam. So in 1857 the Lucknow rebels carried as their standard the turban of one of the city's foremost religious leaders. When the teacher Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly visited Calcutta in the

early years of the nineteenth century, so great was the throng of would-be disciples that, unable to lay hands on all of them, he unravelled his twenty-foot turban and allowed them to initiate themselves by touching part of its length.[24]

Cloth and Its Producers

The qualities with which cloth was seen to be imbued by Indians had implications not only for the status of those who used it, but also for those who produced and serviced it. This section is concerned with the social and moral status of spinners, weavers, dyers and washermen as it affected, and was affected by, the qualities of cloth.

In India as in many other societies, the distinction between spinning and weaving was theoretically central to the division of labour within the family. According to the *Laws of Manu*, unmarried girls were the spinners ('spinsters'), whereas after marriage they graduated to weaving (becoming 'wives'). With the development of professional weaving castes, this distinction became less important, though among artisans themselves, it seems to have persisted until the nineteenth century, when imported thread began to make domestic spinning redundant.

More interesting is the deep ambiguity that attached to the status of the weaver himself in Indian society. Most weaving communities hovered uneasily on the line that separated pure castes (best defined in this context as those from whom Brahmins could take water) and impure ones.[25] Yet the cloth the weavers produced was generally considered neutral. According to the Shastras: 'The hand of the artisan is always pure.'[26] The low, sometimes impure status of many weaving communities seems best explained in terms of historical contingencies. First, weaving communities had often differentiated themselves only recently from pickers of wild cotton or producers of plaited leaf baskets, groups of tribal origin on the fringes of Hindu society. Second, manual work was widely regarded as degrading in the Hindu scheme of occupational precedence. Finally, lower village artisans, including poor weavers, were usually in a dependent position in relation to the agricultural castes in that they received grain payments from their hands as payment for work. Since taking gifts depressed status, weavers were ranked below the clean Shudra agriculturalists.[27] Some evidence for this last interpretation can be found in the fact the urban weavers and more specialized craftsmen in the village who were paid in money through the operation of the market were usually of much higher status.

At the same time, the act of weaving was itself an act of *creation*, almost an act of worship, and this brought about the ambiguity in the position of the weaver. The notion of creation is central to the caste-foundation myths of weaving communities, which themselves embody a claim for high status. According to the legends of the Devangas of Mysore, for instance, in the beginning men went naked and Brahma created Manu to weave cloth for them and hide their shame.[28] When Manu achieved beatitude, he was reincarnated from the eye on Shiva's forehead in the form of Devala. Devala went to fetch the thread for weaving from the heart of the lotus stems that grew out of the navel of Vishnu, the protector. In a battle against demons, Devala invoked the aid of Shiva's consort who slew them. The blood of the demons was used as colouring matter for the cloth and produced the five elemental colours, black, white, red, green and yellow. This and similar myths all evoke the notion of creation through images of the navel and the lotus; other weaving-caste myths have Vishnu seated by the primeval ocean or relate weaving to images of churning or the movement of waves, which also refer back to basic Hindu creation stories. The weaver was thus a flawed creator, a status that bears comparison with the Greek notion that Hephais-tos, patron of artisans, was a divine being, but lame.

Indian weavers could improve on their dubious status by creating finer and 'purer' commodities. The social position of coarse cotton weavers was almost always low; that of fine muslin weavers higher, and silk weavers or groups that produced various gold and silver brocades, the highest of all. Not only were the specialist weavers associated with commodities of greater fitness and purity, but their assured market among aristocrats and temples removed them from dependence on ordinary agricultural patrons. In areas where pre-colonial rulers had been particular patrons of specialist weavers, as in Bengal and Mysore, this appears to have acted to raise the status of the group as a whole. Weavers also sought to improve their status through the claims to equality or rank offered by non-Hindu religions or sects within Hinduism. In north India, many followed the saint-reformer Kabir, himself a weaver; in the south many were Lingayats. Most common of all was conversion to Islam. This is not to say that weavers were highly regarded among Muslims. On the contrary, they were stereotyped as idle, stupid, and quarrelsome: 'a female weaver will even pull her father's beard', went the adage.[29] Yet weavers were noted for their piety in observing festivals: 'What is Id [the major Muslim festival] without the weaver?', it

was said. In particular, weavers taxed themselves heavily on a corporate basis in order to prepare ceremonial floats (*tazias*) for the Mohurrum festival.[30] Muslim reformers of the nineteenth century, such as Sayyid Ahmed Shahid in north India and the Faraizis of Bengal, also found a ready audience among weavers who were attracted to the cry for a purified Muslim religion. But within their profession, Muslim weavers, like Hindus, could always seek to move up, producing finer and purer commodities as a tactic for raising status. For instance, they sought to throw off the rather demeaning title *Julaha* and become instead *Nurbaft* or *Momin*.[31] Nurbaft implies 'capturer [or weaver] of light', so here again the Islamic theme of light impinges on the production of cloth. Dacca muslins of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were peculiarly prized for their whiteness, their lightness in weight and texture, and their capacity to pass through a ring.[32] Many fine fabrics had names that evoked moonlight or cobwebs, which caught light or the substance of dreams. Weavers who sought the highest status, like the silk weavers of Madanpura in Benares, often dressed from head to foot in white themselves. The Lucknow historian Abdul Halim Sharar mentions a group of specially favoured silk craftsmen dressed all in white, who once produced the fabric for the slippers of the high ladies of the court before its fall in 1856. So attached to their hard-won status were they that those who survived under British rule, 'though frustrated and reduced to poverty, will not agree to produce modern slippers to improve their position'.[33]

The potentially high status of the weaver as a creator or craftsman in light is brought out if we compare him to two other occupational groups that came into frequent contact with cloth as a commodity and as a possession: the tailor (*darzi*) and the washerman (*dhobi*). Unlike the carder, spinner and weaver, who were seen by Hindus as creators, the tailor was a cutter, a destroyer. Thus, stitched garments that had previously been cut were regarded as impious among highly orthodox families because in some sense they had lost their integrity, besides being difficult to wash and so acting as traps for impurity. The occupational habits of tailors were also rumoured to be impure because they were said to use spittle in the preparation of thread for sewing and then to wind it between their toes.[34] Finally, for some Brahmins, stitched clothes were associated with Islam, in which wholly different perceptions of stitched garments obtained. The Koranic injunction to Muslims to cover all parts of the body necessitated tailoring; unstitched garments were

regarded as barbaric. Thus, whereas Hindu women regarded the sari as the highest form of female garment and the blouse (*choli*) as demeaning until well into the nineteenth century, Abdul Halim Sharar, the Lucknow Muslim writer, declared: 'The sari is an untailored garment and a relic of primitive times.' Moreover, 'embellishment was a principle of civilisation, otherwise the simplest thing would be to remain in the nude'.[36] The tailor was thus an outcast when he lived in proximity to Hindus, among Muslims he was less condemned, but his work was 'women's work' and therefore degrading.

Finally, the washerman or dhobi intervened when cloth had already become a possession but temporarily became a commodity once again in order to be reprocessed. Commodities, once they have passed through the market, become individualized or 'singularized' into a particular domestic or ritual role. But their cultural lives may not stop here. In the case of cloth, the act of washing temporarily brought it into society once again as a kind of commodity. But this was not a neutral process: the very act of washing transferred the accumulated dirt and pollution of the individual cloth to the dhobi who cleansed it, with ambiguous consequences for his social standing.

As is well known, the ritual position of the dhobi in Hindu society was particularly low in that his trade required him to touch highly polluting substances such as faeces and menstrual blood. Orthodox families generally refused to allow dhobis within their houses, and some Brahmins even ceremonially rewashed their clothes after receiving them back from the dhobi by sprinkling them with Ganges water. Here again one encounters the peculiar quality of cloth retaining and transferring not only dirt, but sin. The dhobi was an inauspicious figure, to be avoided when beginning a journey: he was said to know 'the defects of the village'; more precisely and dangerously, he knew its defecations. James Tod, the British historian of Rajasthan, mentions a revealing oath taken over a well in Rajasthan: 'If I do not perform so-and-so, may all the good deeds of my fathers fall into the washerman's well.'[37] The washerman's well here is literally a kind of hell-hole, in which the accumulated sin and filth of the village are so powerfully concentrated that they can cancel out the good acts of family and condemn its ancestors to perdition. Like all malevolent influences, the dhobi was thought to be particularly tricky. One of his favourite games was to pollute a man's garments without the latter's knowledge, so 'the king's headscarf becomes the washerman's loin cloth'.[37]

But the apparent paradox was this: precisely because the washerman

was known to absorb dirt and sin and dangerous substances generally, he was also capable of playing the role of a minor ritualist, a base priest. At a very lowly level, the washerman reproduced the ambiguous position of the Brahmin priest. Because the priest was in contact with sin and pollution, even his great ritual purity could not always prevail against it. For this reason, priests who officiated at temples were often considered to be of relatively low rank within the Brahmin class, and those who took part in cremation ceremonies and absorbed the sin of the dead were even regarded as inauspicious. In the same way, the Mysore washerman, the Agusa, occupied an important ritual position in village society. No worship of the village goddesses could take place without the help of the Agusa, who officiated as a *pujari* (low ritualist), especially when the goddess of smallpox, cholera, and plague had to be propitiated at the outbreak of one of these epidemics.[38] The theme of washing was prominent in these rites. The washerman would take the idol of the goddess from the family or village shrine and make offerings to it and cleanse it at the place where he normally washed clothes. The malevolent, overheated female powers of the deity, which had caused the outbreak, were thus washed away in the same way that dangerous female pollutants attached to clothes were dispersed by ordinary washing.

Cloth and the Kingdom

The transformative and symbolic qualities of cloth ensured that it retained a position in marking and enhancing relations within broader arenas of society and politics. Like ceremonial food offerings, donations of cloth to temple deities among Hindus or to saints' shrines among Muslims were appropriate because they could be redistributed after worship as sanctified substances. They could capture holiness and pass it on slowly, long after worship—like food, which has a more powerful but only transitory effect. Whole suits of clothing were offered to the gods as to kings. At the tombs of Muslim holy men, it was customary to present a plain white sheet (*chadar*, the same type of cloth used for the winding sheet of corpses); these sheets could later be cut up and distributed among the worshippers.

The role of cloth transactions in both petty local arenas and the wider polity may become clearer if we return to some of the general themes of this book. The concepts of purity and pollution in Indian society provided an unusual pressure in the direction of the singularization of things. That is to say, things were not easily separated from persons;

cloth, for instance, could pick up the substance of the people handling it during manufacture, sale, wearing, even washing. In this context, the anthropologist Célestin Bouglé remarked, in a little-known essay, that patterns of consumption in India were broken down into vast numbers of small circles. No dynamic general market could exist in India, he thought, because each caste had its own food, its own vessels, its own clothing, insignia, and so forth. So, 'where the caste system reigns, the empire of custom which forces us to imitate our ancestors, opposes the inroads of fashion which invites us to imitate strangers'.[39]

However, there were equally powerful forces working in the direction of commoditization. Things had to acquire a neutral status within the village for transactions in food and essential goods to take place. In larger polities, exchange had to be general for kings to amass resources, especially revenue paid in silver rupees. Some cultural strategies mediating this conflict have been noted: the 'hand of the artisan' was held to be pure; fine, pollution-resistant materials could be used; cloths could be washed or sprinkled with Ganges water. But the major institution that mediated between commoditization and singularization was the office of the king, whether this be construed as the dominant caste brotherhood within the village or the emperor of all India. The duty of the king was to consume the wares of his subjects and to make his court the great engine of redistribution. In this way, the needs of the particularistic local community producing a good could be balanced with the needs of the polity as a whole. The propagation of diversity in patterns of consumption—of cloths, fruits, spices, grains—was the physical manifestation of the king's classic role as arbiter between the castes. And it was changes in royal consumption, or the consumption of those aspiring to local political dominance, that provided the Indian economy with the dynamism Bouglé thought it lacked.

For these reasons gifts of cloth retained their place within the ranking and tribute systems of Indian states long after payments and presentations in kind had been replaced by coin and the outward signs of a fully commercialized economy. But the relationship between flows of cloth and flows of money within early modern Indian kingdoms was extremely complex, for questions of value were intimately bound up with matters of political economy. The use of cloth as a medium for integrating the kingdom might precede, supplement, or even outlast the operation of tributary flows of money, and at no point did cloth become 'merely' a commodity, whose production and distribution was solely determined by market forces. The close and ambiguous relationship between coin

and cloth is seen at the very heart of Mughal court ritual, for instance, the presentation of *nazar* or coins in exchange for a suit of clothes or valued cloths (the khelat).[40] In this transaction, the king was pledging protection and incorporating the subject into his royal body through the action of the royal charisma that was immanent in the cloth. The donation of cloth in effect prolonged the 'sight' (*darshan*) of royalty for the subject, who was thought to benefit morally and materially from his contact with kingship. But since the subject could not himself confer benefit on the king (unless he was an equal or near-equal) by a gift of cloth or food, the neutral medium of money was used.

Cloth transactions continued to underpin the commercial structure of the Mughal Empire. In areas where gold and silver were scarce, payment was often made in cloth. Thus a large part of the tribute of Kashmir was paid in the fine woolen shawls that were its most prized product. An important section of the royal household at Delhi was devoted to the reception, grading and storage of shawls and other cloths remitted from the outer Empire. Later, after the incorporation into the Empire of the rich province of Bengal, a new administrative arm, the *malmul khas* (muslin house) was established to oversee the provision of Bengal muslins and silks for the courts at Delhi and Agra.[41] Heavy consumption of Bengal muslins (as of Gujarat silks) was an act of patronage designed to tie the new provinces to the Empire and to legitimate the tribute taken from them. The Emperor Jahangir himself set the pattern for wearing light muslins and pearls at court, and the style rapidly diffused through the aristocracy and administration. But the greatest source of demand was the women's quarters of the north Indian courts. European visitors remarked that in the early seventeenth century, the Delhi court alone housed 2000 women, the vast majority of whom were aristocratic ladies obliged by convention to replace every 24 hours their dresses, which comprised two or three pieces of Bengal muslin each.[42] This demand alone accounted for about one million pieces per annum, at an estimated 50–100 rupees each. The value of the malmul khas therefore equalled a substantial proportion of the land tax that Bengal paid in coin to the centre, so that dress conventions established by court ritual exercised a formative influence on the whole structure of north Indian trade. A later observer, William Hamilton, remarked that until about 1730, the tribute of Bengal had been remitted to the centre by bankers' bills, 'for the payment of which sufficient funds were at Delhi and Lahore supplied in the sale and consumption of the rich manufactures of Bengal. In fact, if it had not been so, no tribute could ever have been remitted'.[43] When

Persian invasions and internal turbulence impoverished the nobility of the Empire's heartland, no more tribute was in fact paid 'as it was utterly impossible that the same or indeed any considerable sum could have been transferred from a country of which gold and silver form no part of the natural products'.

It can be seen, then, that the consumption preferences of the court played an important part in integrating the money economy of the Mughal Empire. These patterns of consumption, at the heart of which lay the 'administered trade' in Kashmir shawls or Bengal and Gujarat cloths, had grown out of systems of ritual presentation. Transactions in goods continued to represent more than simple commodity flows. The Mughal Emperor received cloth and other precious things from his domains because a great king was a great consumer and was honoured in accord with the variety of fine products displayed at his court. The concept of variety is important here; all the chroniclers harp on it. Whereas 'uniform'—a uniformity of clothes—has often symbolized and enhanced the unity of modern states, a *controlled diversity of styles* signified the greatness of the Mughal and other oriental monarchs. Like God's, the king's house must contain many mansions. Courtiers and officials from different regions developed stylized forms of the dress of their different regions and took care to display their particular cloth styles within the broad limits laid down by the prevailing court conventions. The variety of turban, cloak and mantle represented, but also in a sense fixed, the styles of artisan production appropriate to the different homelands and divisions of the state.

This pattern was common to less exalted dominances also. Much has been written of the remittance of land revenue from peasant to official, landlord or king. But the opposite flow, representing the duty of the notable to consume the natural and human produce of his territories, has been neglected. For instance, the rapid expansion and growing eminence throughout the subcontinent of the cotton products of the district of Azamgarh after 1650 appears to have been connected with the fact that this district was made over as a land revenue assignment to the daughter of the Emperor Shahjahan. By offering continuous patronage and a ready market, the royal lady's household ensured the development there of a new cloth industry.[44]

The importance of the role of presentations in cloth for the structure of Indo-Muslim kingdoms is emphasized by the persistence of these transactions even after the market or administration of the empire or kingdom had declined. At Delhi in the 1780s, observers noted the presence of the distinctive striped cloth of the small province of Kara.[45]

Kara was almost the last significant political division outside the environs of the capital to be directly ruled by the Mughal Emperor, and it was his place of exile during the late 1760s and early 1770s. The Muslim kingdom of Arcot in south India provides another example. After 1800 its erstwhile ruler was reduced to the position of a pensioner of the British. His agents had been replaced everywhere by British appointees, and he subsisted on a relatively small allowance. Yet a chronicle of about 1820 records a journey through 'his' territory by the ruler with a retinue supposedly numbering 20,000 men, during which the Nawab visited the holy places and reaffirmed his sovereignty over all the petty kings and officials of the realm as it stood in about 1760. At every point in this progress the chronicler noted in stunning detail the colour, texture, style and place of origin of the cloth and clothes that passed between the ruler and 'his' subjects. Thus, a subordinate official was given a red shawl, a more important one a blue and gold turban manufactured at the reputed centre of 'Madhra'.[46] The guardian of a saint's tomb received a pure white shawl, and in return a holy man gave the Nawab a dress of pure white,[47] which symbolized his own role as a guardian of the holy places of south India, Mecca and Medina. Again, the particular colours and dresses of the Nawab were noted in great detail because each symbolized—but also enhanced—an aspect of his royalty. He rode at one stage in an 'emerald-coloured coach and reclined on a cushion of red English hide for 'these two colours betoken the prosperity and contentment of the Nawab'.[48] In his aspect of royal sun, he wore a robe of gold thread, but when emphasizing his family and religious status, he rode in a 'Wallajahi-green coach',[49] Wallajah being the family name and green the Prophet's colour. It seems that each gift and each piece of cloth worn conveyed the precise status of the recipient or wearer, though the meanings of these gradations are often difficult to recover.

In the late seventeenth century India was one of the greatest producers and certainly the greatest exporter of cloth in the world. Even in a society where state revenue was paid in cash and a sophisticated market system existed, direct transactions of gifted commodities—notably food and cloth—bonded a vast number of social relationships. A mid-nineteenth-century source reckoned, for example, that only 20 per cent of the subcontinent's raw cotton production was sold as such in internal or external markets. The vast bulk was made up into cloth and used in local transactions, given as offerings by weavers to superiors, by villagers to Brahmins and temples, or by agricultural magnates to their dependents as patronage. Transactions in cloth or grain could transfer

value and honour (though also pollution and dishonour) in a way money could not. Cloth, in comparison with grain or cooked food, was a safer medium of transaction since it stored 'bio-moral energy' longer, though it was unable to create the same immediate transfer of brotherhood (or pollution) as a feast, for instance.

Even within the market, the supply, nature and distribution of cloth was influenced, though more distantly, by cultural preferences and expectations. Kings and other great men were expected to patronize producers and markets without close reference to questions of price or immediate need. This explains the custom by which a royal cavalcade, entering or leaving the market area of a city, was expected to pause and purchase directly in the bazaars, stepping outside the royal provisioning system for a time. This helped to emphasize the king's immediate concern for the welfare of his producers. In fact, the totality of such transactions within and outside the market can be regarded as something like a political discourse upholding the legitimacy of the ruler and pledging the attachment of subjects. Indian society spoke partly in the idiom of cloth, though idiom is really too weak a word since cloth could actually transfer power and transform relationships. The penetration of European goods during the nineteenth century and the end of royal patronage for India's weavers and spinners represented, therefore, something more than a crisis in economic history. It actually came to be a crisis of legitimacy for the new colonial rulers. Following Habermas, we are used to thinking of crises of legitimacy in modern western societies as the product of a breakdown in the discourse regarding duties and obligations linking state and society. In pre-industrial agrarian kingdoms, however, transactions in goods representing the labour and integrity of communities, castes and families were themselves elevated to the status of discourse. The failure of the king to consume, the artisan to produce, or the merchant to market was tantamount to a denial of political obligation.

The Origins of Swadeshi

The remainder of this chapter concerns the disruption of India's internal transactions in cloth as a result of the import of European machine-made goods, and the attempt to reconstitute the basis of home consumption through the swadeshi movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These topics have received considerable attention from economic historians, from analysts concerned with the political history of the Indian National Congress and from nationalist writers themselves. The concern here, however, is first the perception of these

events by Indians and, second, the elaboration in the modern period of attitudes to cloth, weavers and weaving that informed the cultural ordering of cloth consumption before colonial rule. Historians have generally addressed the issue of colonial penetration in terms of the practical reason of the marketplace. Indians bought British textiles, it is asserted, because they were cheaper by 30–50 per cent than the indigenous ones and of finer quality. Even if this were granted, some consideration is required of the impact of this utilitarian deluge on the customs, assumptions and relationships that were built around the exchange of cloth.

In fact, though, the spread of British products in India was a reflection of changing culture and political economy and not merely a response to better prices. Similarly, the later rejection of European styles and British goods, partial as it was, transcended purely practical politics and touched on issues of national identity, which temporarily resurrected the transformative value of cloth. In fact, even those Europeans who sold cloth to Indians were aware that simple economizing was not the only issue: taste had to be considered and cultural preferences accommodated. As Sir George Watt put it in about 1900:

> Throughout India, certain localities are famed for the qualities, design, etc., of their goods. The merchant must ascertain the exact size and shape, the particular quality and colour in demand in each locality. The mere fact of offering a superior quality of goods is no inducement to trade. Few countries in the world are more conservative regarding their garments than the various races and castes of India.[50]

How, then, do culturally determined patterns of consumption change to accommodate alien manufactures in a society in which the market itself is not powerful enough to create taste? Here it is important that the first English broadcloths and cotton goods were beginning to be imported into India during the final metamorphosis of the Mughal political system after 1740, when new regional consumer aristocracies were establishing themselves, notably in Lucknow, Bengal and Hyderabad. The elaborate patterns of consumption that emerged in these sub-Mughal courts proved to be an excellent medium through which European cloths and clothes could become valued articles.

Late Mughal Kingship and Consumption

The consumption patterns of the Mughal successor states of the eighteenth century, whether in food, cloth, or architectural style, were becoming more involute, varied and elaborate. In part, this reflected political instability and the desire of new dynasties and their servants to validate themselves by use of the material symbols of as many earlier

or contemporary rulers as possible. The very instability of office, particularly in a situation where short-lived arriviste dynasties were served by eunuchs and an increasingly professionalized administration severed from direct control of the land, encouraged competitive consumption. When the great Lucknow eunuch-administrator Jawahir Ali Khan paraded his contingent of soldiers and servants, '*Sabit-khanis* [household troops] in mango green livery, irregulars in black, Mewatis [a Muslim convert group] in white', this display made other rich men of the city 'burn with envy' according to the chronicler Faiz Baksh.[51] It is significant that this parading of military power by rulers and aristocrats provided the first important avenue through which English textiles achieved value in society and began to balance the English East India Company's exports in the manner previously reserved for silver. As European military advisers and armaments became more common in eighteenth-century India, rulers sought to enhance the prowess of their own armies by dressing them in scarlet English broadcloth. Thick, dyed red cloth and red harness were peculiarly appropriate to the traditional colour coding of the Indian warrior classes; and the use of red serge spread from the Nawab of Awadh's 60,000-man army to that of his competitors and by degrees to a whole range of irregulars, guards and doormen. The potency of the image of the 'red coat' is evident throughout nineteenth-century India and persists even today. Red sepoys guard the doors of Rajput palaces as murals; redcoats march in marriage processions; and the red sepoy even became the symbol on the banner of the priest-genealogists who await pilgrims at the great Hindu river festivals.

The association of English broadcloth with military prowess was matched by the incentive to use imported styles and fabrics in what might be called political display. Factions in the Mughal court had often marked themselves off by particular dress and preferences for certain types of cloth. Sharar mentions, for instance, the example of the 'Kandahari pyjama',[52] which became fashionable at court when nobles wished to associate themselves with the valour of the soldiers from that town. Akbar's search for a syncretic Hindu–Muslim faith for his reconstituted Empire was marked by a greater use of silk and the renaming of articles of Muslim dress with Sanskrit terms.[53]

Turbans became smaller at this time, to accommodate Muslim headgear to Hindu style. Similarly, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, court factions trying to establish alliances with the British community adopted some European styles and products. The

rise of the 'General's *topi*' (hat) and the European-buttoned frock coat (*sherwani*) at Lucknow in the 1820s[54] paralleled the court's shift from Mughal tributary to a growing dependence on the British. (It is splendid irony that the present-day rulers of Pakistan, embarrassed by the un-Islamic Savile Row suits that their founder Mohammed Ali Jinnah habitually wore in contemporary photographs, have retouched him back into the sherwani, a garment that actually marked a much more critical shift towards western dress.)

Another avenue of consumption preference by which European goods first breached oriental patterns of consumption was the insatiable desire of India's rulers for novelties. Trade routes and commercial connections established for the sale of clocks, china menageries, mirrors and elaborate embroidery were later adapted to supply aristocratic taste in cloth, and finally helped create a mass demand for imported textiles. European writers tended to see the demand for novelties as a childish desire for trinkets. Actually, the profusion of novelties in a court was considered another mark of great kingship. It bespoke vast and varied realms, connections with far-off kings; as God the ruler of the universe had created all manner of beasts and objects, so his earthly shadow must rule over a profusion of creations. Commercial agents up-country remarked how much easier it was at first to find a market for novelties than for standard manufactures. Cloths from England with different colours on each side were favoured at the Hardwar fair.[55] Lucknow supported a huge demand for anything made with glass. Huge quantities of sheet glass from England were used in the creation of the great prayer halls (the Chhota and Bara Imambaras),[56] and looking glasses, spyglasses and sequined cloth found a ready market.

Courts also borrowed and learned from one another, and though knowledge of the aristocratic style of Europe was minimal in India before the mid-nineteenth century, contact with other Asian courts was more frequent. The 'Sultan of Rum'—the Ottoman Emperor—was an important model here because most Indian monarchs venerated him as Protector of the Holy Places and retained embassies at Istanbul. The Ottoman style had already abandoned its classic Islamic line and colour. During the eighteenth century closer incorporation of Turkey into the concert of Europe had signalled the appearance of Louis Quinze furniture, Meissen porcelain, English velvet and gloves. Then, after 1780, a wholesale westernization of court dress occurred as pressure for military reforms grew within the Empire.[57] What was happening in Istanbul, as in contemporary Indian courts, was a substantial shift in

material culture, as the object and furniture replaced the classic line of formal Islamic art as the pattern for living space. The embellishment of the inside of buildings with a profusion of objects, pictures, tapestries and furniture became the order of the day in India, reaching its apogee in the cluttered Malik Palace of Calcutta, with its crowd of carrara marble statues, and the Salar Jang Palace in Hyderabad, where grandfather clocks jostled with huge French *chaises-longues*. It was through this shift in aristocratic taste that English fabrics and English clothing styles first gained a foothold in the Indian market.

Two underlying principles were at work here. First, it is probable that, as with the sepoys' red coats, a strong magical influence was operating with regard to European fabrics and styles. Hamilton Buchanan noted in 1812 in the up-country Bengal district of Dinjapur that articles used by European gentlemen who were returning home sold in the local market for considerably more than their Calcutta market price and costs of transport.[58] It was as if people wanted these objects as tokens of superior European power. Second, it is important that this first stage in the colonization of Indian taste occurred at a time when Indo-Muslim style was itself becoming more varied, embellished and involute, thus facilitating the incorporation of foreign novelties in its principles of design. It may be that an aesthetic shift was taking place that was largely autonomous of changes in the political economy.[59]

A transition from pure, classical forms on the one hand to elaborate, 'baroque' styles on the other has taken place from time to time within the great artistic traditions, and it is often both difficult and suspect to reduce these transformations to matters of social change or political economy. The mind of the artist, trammelled by convention, may seek to break free, first by a dense repetition of themes, later by ornamentation. But if this period of change coincides with intense political competition or the inroads of foreign influences, as it did in eighteenth-century India, variety and complexity might be redoubled.

Cultural Factors in the Growth of Mass Imports

If changes in royal and aristocratic taste provide an opportunity for the entry of British commodities into India, what was the social context within which this market penetration dramatically broadened? By the 1870s, Britain was supplying 25–30 per cent of eastern India's total demand for cloth. First, of course, the growing reputation of European dress styles in India greatly stimulated the market for textiles themselves. Dress, always a marker of identities, became an explosive issue in the early nineteenth century as an obvious marker of cultural change.

Sharar's account of Lucknow in the 1860s and 1870s illustrates how complex the process had become. Rival schools of theologians adopted different styles of headgear.[60] Modernizing Sunni Muslims like Sir Sayyid Ahmad adopted European clothes and a Turkish headpiece; modernizing Shia Muslims took European clothes and the four-pointed hat associated with Persian reformers. Loose-fitting pyjamas were appropriate to the more orthodox among rebellious youth, while alcohol drinkers and meat eaters took to tight English trousers. The emergence of English-style professions after 1850, with their emphasis on occupational rituals and conformity, also tended to break down resistance to European clothing and hence to English fabrics. Class formation and access to the resources of the colonial power both demanded an accommodation with Europe, at least in the public arena. Hindus who had worn Mughal court dress with Hindu *dhoti*s in private now exchanged the Muslim style for frock coat and trousers. European clothes and styles had a differential effect on various occupational groups. Professional men and government servants were the most westernized, landowners in contact with magistrates and collectors the next so, whereas mercantile people and Brahmins generally retained their traditional loose white garments. In the countryside, there was no appreciable shift towards European *styles* of clothing. But by 1870, English textiles that could be made up into Indian styles were in widespread use.

The economic facts are known well enough.[61] The rapid improvement of internal and external transport after 1850 greatly reduced the costs that the Lancashire mill owners and exporters incurred in selling their goods in India. Railways and better roads opened up villages in the interior, so that by 1880, up to 30 per cent of eastern India's demand for cloth was met by foreign imports. Two other factors were at work. First, the expansion of the silver money supply after 1857, combined with the faster pace of economic and demographic growth, pushed Indian prices higher. This tended to increase the labour cost of the indigenous artisan, who had to pay more for his food and essential supplies. The price differential between European industrial products and local, handwoven cloth grew greater. Second, Lancashire's greater competitiveness coincided with a surge in Indian rural consumer spending as agricultural prices went up and the relative weight of state demand for land revenue came down throughout India. Only in the 1890s did the Indian mills in Bombay and Ahmedabad begin to take back these lost markets.

Although observers such as Watt and Watson emphasized the imperative need for exporters to pay attention to style, colour and use, preference for homespun cloth as such had generally broken down.

C.A. Silberrad wrote of the United Provinces: 'There is hardly a trace of preference for hand-woven over machine-woven articles on caste or sentimental grounds.'[62] He did mention that a number of 'old-fashioned landowners' in Bara Banki district patronized indigenous weavers, and other sources indicate that substantial numbers of artisans were still producing fabrics for specialist religious functions, a market completely closed to imported textiles. Superior colour and fine texture, always valued in indigenous cloth production, gave English fabrics the advantage. Only where especially durable or very cheap cloth was required did hand-woven textiles hold out in the face of direct foreign competition. In the medium- and high-quality ranges, Lancashire was one-third cheaper at least and was making rapid inroads into the market until India's own factories moved into mass production in the 1880s.

However, explanations of the British penetration of the Indian market in these terms seem inadequate in that they seem to suggest that purely economizing and utilitarian consumption preferences had taken over in an area that had previously been influenced by ritual, notions of kingship and questions of community. This was not so. In the initial phase of mass sales, English cloth succeeded because it was compatible with the cultural preferences of local consumers. In parts of the world where it was not compatible—the Far East, for instance—no such headway was made despite equivalent price advantages and better transport. The fact was that English cloth fitted into the area of consumption preferences once occupied by very fine, close-woven cottons and indigenous silks. Interestingly, a wide range of English-made cloths were designated *nankeen*, a word taken over from the high-quality, fine-textured Chinese cloths that the East India Company had once imported from the China coast. English nankeen looked good, was easily washed, and was more comfortable to wear than Indian cloth. It was beginning to acquire a cachet: the peasantry considered it 'a mark of being well-off to be able to dress their wives and children in English manufactured cloth'.[63] A reputation for fineness of weave and 'cleanness' contrasted with the still lowly reputation of homespun. Foreign cloth avoided the many dangers and uncertainties associated with artisan products, which still retained the ghost of their transformative essences. Only the impact of nationalism began to shift these preferences.

Swadeshi and Home Industry

The swadeshi movement, which in its radical form was complemented by a boycott of English goods, bears comparison with other nativistic

upsurges in Asia and Africa that rejected European products or refused to produce European crops as symbols of local or national oppression. The interest of these campaigns for this chapter is how in their course, Indian nationalist leaders transformed and used the themes of protection, legitimacy, shame and magic that were associated with cloth and dress in popular mentalities. In particular, Gandhi himself went beyond the use of homespun as a mere symbol to penetrate to even deeper levels of meaning about the nature of weaving as a creative act, about the dhobi's cleansing as a token of redemption, and about the capacity of cloth to retain the luminosity of place and people.

Before the 1880s, resistance to the colonialization of taste and the import of European goods was at best sporadic. The Madras army mutinied at Vellore in 1806, when British regulations seemed to threaten the customary style of turbans, and hence the virility of the sepoys. Muslim jurists at first allowed the use of European clothes, provided that indigenous dress (associated with the Prophet himself) was used at mosques. Later, some learned men issued injunctions against European dress and English cloth on the grounds that they damaged the livelihood of weavers who were the ballast of the Muslim community. But the most widespread ventilation of the plight of weavers, outside British papers, was seen during the north Indian Rebellion of 1857 against colonial rule. Many rebel proclamations referred specifically to the ill done by British imports. The Azamgarh proclamation, for instance, noted how weavers, cotton dressers, carpenters, blacksmiths and others had been reduced to penury. 'But under the Badshahi government [restored Mughal rule] the Indian artisans will be employed exclusively in the services of the kings, the rajas, and the rich, and this will no doubt ensure their prosperity.'[64] Artisans were urged to join the Rebellion, and a substantial number of them did so in the small towns of the Ganges valley. It does seem that the failure of British government to purchase artisan wares—its failure to engage in reciprocal transactions in return for tribute or to provide service—amounted to a crisis of legitimacy for it. British officials in the early nineteenth century frequently encountered complaints that the East India Company had forgone its duty to consume and build, constructing instead merely 'jails and courthouses'. If in a literate society, a legitimacy crisis is manifested in the collapse of public discourse about the obligations of government, in a preliterate society, the failure of government to transact in an accepted medium of exchange, whether it be cloth, or cattle, or bird-of-paradise feathers, might have the same implication.

Articulate and sustained opposition to British imports, however, only took fire in the late nineteenth century, as a precursor to the nationalist movement. Its first peak was the swadeshi campaign in Bengal from 1905 to 1910, which was a concerted effort to boost home industry through a boycott of British goods. The spark that ignited swadeshi was political, the decision by the government of Lord Curzon to partition the province of Bengal and dampen radical nationalism in the process. But the ideas of the movement had been propagated for several decades by Indian businessmen and mill owners to promote their own products in a difficult commercial environment.[65] Swadeshi was also heir to a movement of artistic revival, which sought to protect the values of indigenous craft traditions against the impersonality of all mill production and the drab uniformity of chemical dyes. British officials such as E.B. Havell, long-time proponent of Indian crafts and champion of the fly shuttle, had been stimulating interest in handloom weaving since the 1880s.[66] Havell and others like him saw a growing market for Indian hand-made exotica in an England where urbanization and industrialization had brought about an 'arcadian reaction' associated with the work of artists such as William Morris. Havell's ideas, however, were not purely practical. They reflected the stirrings of an idealist philosophy of social progress, conservative in nature, which stressed the integrity of the community and the idea of self-help. Havell warned artisans against taking help from the government, 'all that is worth having you must and can do for yourselves'.[67] This theme was taken up with passion by the first generation of Indian art critics. Ananda Coomaraswamy, for instance, wrote of 'the regeneration of India through art and not by economics and politics alone'. The 'vulgarization of modern India with its caricature of European dress', along with 'cut glass and china dogs', was damning proof of 'some mighty evil in our souls'. Swadeshi therefore should be 'a religious and artistic ideal'.[68]

In practical terms the swadeshi movement was a limited success. A boycott of British manufactures that lasted more than a few months was usually effective only where powerful landowners took a leading part. Though the decline in the number of rural weavers in Bengal and eastern India seems to have slowed during the two decades between 1890 and 1910, swadeshi could have been only one of the factors involved. But regardless of this, handloom weaving had already been transformed from an endangered rural craft to a powerful symbol of the moral and spiritual regeneration of India. A variety of new themes had emerged

The boycott of British goods was part of a wider aim to 'sever all connections with the colonial ruling classes'. In the words of S.N. Bannerjea, swaraj (freedom) and swadeshi were linked: 'We must be swadeshi in all things, swadeshi in our thoughts, and in our educational methods and development.'[69] Freedom was more than just a European notion, it was 'a return of the satyayuga [age of truth] of national greatness'. Indians who sold British goods were also to be boycotted in what was a modern attempt to define the boundaries of community and polity in terms of the production and consumption of cloth. Frequent references were made to the prosperity of Bengal in the time when the Mughal emperors had patronized the weavers of Dacca and Murshidabad through the malmul khas. Indeed, the modern historiography of Mughal India started from this very point and is still infused with themes of swadeshi.

These themes were popularly enacted at the great mass protests against the partition of Bengal, when persons taking a vow to the nation ceremonially cleansed themselves with a dip in the Ganges, then emerged to dress in Indian cloth and tied on one another's arms the yellow and vermilion braids or bangles called *rakhis*.[70] Previously used to symbolize ties between brother and sister within the family, these bands, which were always locally woven, became symbols of a wider national brotherhood. Because the use of home-produced cloth often involved a financial loss of income, it being more expensive than imported cloth, some popular leaders developed the theme of sacrifice in their pronouncements on swadeshi. Sri Aurobindo, for instance, stressed that the discarding of foreign goods was an act of sacrifice that had to precede personal and national regeneration. 'We must abandon the life of the individual and lead the life of the nation.' British textiles were the poison, he said, which fosters the antidote, a new religious fervour and self-abandonment before the 'glorified Mother', the goddess Durga, protector of Bengal.[71]

Not only the context of consumption and the soul of the consumer but the quality of country cloth itself attracted attention during these years. The cheaper country cloths had been regarded as rough, homely, perhaps even slightly dirty, whereas British cloths had a reputation for fineness and purity. Popular singers, actors and preachers made strenuous efforts to reverse these stereotypes, directing their message to women in particular. Some rumours circulated to the effect that British cloth, which had been dyed with unknown chemicals, was actually unclean (imported sugar was rumoured to be impregnated with cow fat).[72]

At the same time, the very homeliness and loose, thick weave of village cloth were lauded for their naturalness, purity and lack of sophistication, which here became a term of opprobrium. Village songs of the 1905–10 period associated country cloth with images of motherhood, with thick white rice and curd, and with the good things of the unpolluted countryside.[73]

This redefinition of purity and its association with the quality of cloth was, of course, taken to its most elaborate conclusion by Mahatma Gandhi himself. Whereas the Bengali swadeshi leaders of 1905–10 had in general used homespun as a political symbol, Gandhi emphasized its nature as a talisman and pronounced the creation of cloth through spinning to be a prayer. The production of cloth in villages by spinning and weaving was to transform the moral fibre of the nation in a quite literal sense. The themes of the artisan as a pure creator and the exchange of cloth as embodying an augmentation of moral status were, as we have seen, implicit in many popular notions of the quality of cloth. It was Gandhi's genius that, notwithstanding the incoherence of his formal economic and political thought, he was able to enlist around a single issue a huge range of beliefs, aspirations, and popular symbols. Cloth stood alongside the symbols of mother cow and freely prepared salt at the heat of the national movement of the 1920s and 1930s.

If we look at the voluminous works of Gandhi and his disciples on the issue of homespun (khadi), several subplots emerge. First, there is the reappearance of the notion of protection as an important element of transactions in cloth and clothes. By a symbolic paradox, the consumption of millions of rupees worth of foreign goods leaves Indian men and women poor and naked (the image of female nakedness and shame was a particularly powerful one for Gandhi). Hence, patriotic Indians should spin their own yarn and commission country weavers to make it up into homespun. It was a moral and religious duty to make it possible to return to those prosperous days when 'thousands of women of high birth spun their own yarn and got it woven by professional weavers'.[74] Women should be brought once again into the labour process and augment India's productive power, but at the same time the ancient status of women would be reaffirmed: Manu says that the duty of a wife is to weave and of an unmarried woman to spin. On the consumer's side, total abstinence from machine-made goods was enjoined. Even Bombay-manufactured cloths must be abandoned as part of the elementary religious duty of being 'kind and attentive to one's neighbours', which

was also the basis of good polity. Speaking at the town of Godhara in 1919, Gandhi said:

> So long as the Godhara farmers and weavers could supply the wants of the Godhara citizens, the latter had no right to go outside Godhara and support even [say] the Bombay farmers and weavers. He could not starve his neighbour and claim to save his distant cousin on the North Pole.[75]

The government, moreover, had forfeited its right to rule by failing to acknowledge the basic duty of the raja—to succour its clients and people through the encouragement of their arts and the consumption of their goods.

These arguments were an elaboration of the swadeshi ideology of 1905–10. But where Gandhi was an innovator was in his reaffirmation of the religious and magical aspects of cloth boycott and burning, of spinning and wearing homespun. Rabindranath Tagore perceived this easily and condemned its implications. Neatly turning the metaphor, he wrote: 'Consider the burning of cloth heaped up before the very eyes of our Motherland, shivering and ashamed in her nakedness. What is the nature of the call to do this, is it not another instance of the magical formula?'[76] Gandhi replied that to him it was 'sinful' for a man to wear the 'latest finery of Regent Street when his neighbours the spinners and weavers starve . . . The knowledge of sin bursts upon me; I must consign foreign garments to the fire and thus purify myself and thenceforth rest content with the khadi homespun made by my neighbours'.[77] Later, during the 1920s, Gandhi further elaborated the theme that spinning was an act of prayer (a mantra), both a purgation of individual sin and a creation of new life in the spinner and in the community. Against considerable opposition, the spinning of certain quantities of yarn was temporarily adopted as a condition of admission to certain offices within the Indian National Congress. White homespun became and remained the uniform of its party workers and officials. If involute dis-tinctions of dress had been a mark of caste society, the widespread adoption of khadi would create a uniformity of appearance in which good acts alone would distinguish superior castes. Gandhi sought in fact to resolve the ambiguity we noted between the pure and godly action that was embodied in the artisan's craft and the low, even outcast status that characterized the country spinner and weaver himself. All Indians were to become spinners, weavers and washermen, just as they were to become the lowest of all, the sweepers who cleaned lavatories. Finally,

Gandhi sought to ritualize once again the very tools of the trade and the 'commodity' itself. His own search for the appropriate spinning wheel was infused with the notion of spiritual quest, and at the same time harkened back to anthropomorphic ideas common among spinners and weavers, who held the wheel to be an actual member of the family. At the same time he constantly emphasized the purity and godliness imparted to its wearers by the homespun. Khadi in his hands regained its transformative and magical qualities, while the spinning wheel took its place on the Congress flag.

This article has suggested that the ideas and assumptions associated with cloth in Indian society can be analysed at more than one level. In the villages and in the Hindu or Indo-Muslim state, the notion that cloth was a thing that could retain qualities imparted to it by individuals or groups who fashioned or came into contact with it stood in opposition to the need to make cloth a neutral commodity in order to facilitate a general exchange of gold, silver and essential goods. The role of the dominant village elite or of the king was to mediate between these processes of 'singularization' and 'commoditization'. Ideas about the transformative role of cloth therefore continued to perform a functional role in the integration of Indian states and of caste society through the office of the king.

In the modern period, too, Gandhi's ideology of cloth making and cloth use fulfilled more than one function in the political economy. Gandhi and his closest supporters opposed Indian manufactured cloth as vehemently as foreign products. But industrialists, and politicians such as Jawaharlal Nehru, who advocated technological progress for India, adopted an ambiguous position on the issue. Consciously or not, they enlisted the moral and political capital generated by the Mahatma's campaign for village weaving in support of their own push for Indian freedom and industrialization. Bombay's mills, for instance, produced careful, machine-made copies of different sorts of homespun fabrics for distribution in the interior.[78] Industrialists such as the Birlas and Tatas gave money to Gandhi's swadeshi campaigns out of piety even while they implicitly opposed the anti-industrial tenor of his wider message. In turn, the Republic of India has spent large sums on the propagation of homespun through institutions such as the chain of Khadi Bhawans (homespun retail stores), which often function at a loss despite the government's strong commitment to competitive industry. Government must still be seen to protect local employment, community and skills.

it cannot promote commoditization through industrialization too rapidly; it must be seen to mediate between the singular and the commodity.

Conclusion

According to several recent formulations, the Indian economy in the immediate pre-colonial period was 'proto-capitalist', and colonial India an exampie of 'arrested capitalist development'. These influential notions must presumably be taken to imply more than the existence of sophisticated markets and the long-standing payment of land revenue in cash. They must surely also mean that some degree of transformation had taken place in the values and assumptions that linked individuals to one another and to the market. Only in this way could the market itself have begun to allocate value and could a notion of impersonal capital have emerged. Whichever theorists or definitions of capitalism are employed, changes in ideology and social organization are now considered to have been causes and not merely consequences of the transition to early capitalism. Marx himself presupposed the creation of a stable state structure and concepts of property within which new modes of capitalist production could crystallize; many recent Marxist theorists have gone further, illustrating how the ideological and political 'superstructure' intervenes as an autonomous force in the very process of production. Weber, of course, argued that the existence of an expansive capitalistic ethic was a precondition for economic transition. Sombart linked changes in family relationships and the 'secularization of love' to the growth of a capitalist market through an increased demand for luxury commodities. It is this last angle of approach to the relationship between values and markets that has been least exploited by historians, who have characteristically examined the mentalities of entrepreneurs to the exclusion of any consideration of the relationship between people and commodities. One general test of the emergence of capitalist values seems to be the disappearance from everyday life of a widely accepted working definition of the concepts of 'good' and 'evil', of the 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious'. Relations to people and things mediated through the market leave little room for such judgements of value. This is because it is imperative that individuals be severed from their pre-existing statuses and allocated new, universally comparable ones in a capitalistic labour market. In the same way, it is essential that goods be shorn of the luminosity of place and the spirit of reciprocity in a fullfledged commodity market. Thus, the 'evil eye' and the 'devil'

(characteristic incubuses of the peasant economy) had been eliminated from everyday discourse in that classic proto-capitalistic society, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, according to Alan Macfarlane.[79] The sense of sin and of the inauspicious had been displaced from ordinary parlance and ordinary things to the realm of theological controversy. Only on the fringes of capitalist development, as in tribal Latin America, did the devil retain a place in the village, as a representation of the gathering deluge of a capitalist labour market and capitalist commodities.[80] The village and the modern economy were marked off from each other by sin and the devil.

In India, such stark transitions have not been seen over the last three hundred years. What is striking here is the way in which the formal apparatus of markets and a monetized economy moulded themselves to and were accommodated by mentalities that still viewed the relationships between men, commodities and other men in terms of good (pure) and evil (polluting). For one thing, goods were only marketed commodities for a short span of their lives in society. As artifacts in the process of production, they carried the spirit of the maker and in turn influenced his ranking; as gifts they acted in complex ways to modify the nature of the donor and the recipient; as possessions, goods could retain and store good and evil. The life of a commodity in the impersonal market was a short one. But even here, market value did not wholly obliterate human value. Buyers and sellers were constrained by obligations that required that they purchase certain things at certain times, in certain markets. The widespread existence of markets, moneylenders, and double-entry account books was not incompatible with the persistence of pre-capitalist mentalities in material culture. In fact, material culture was never simply material, and it certainly cannot be simply opposed to capitalism or even luxury; money of itself could not transform relationships--an obvious point, but one that needs stating in the face of much contemporary Indian economic history. Even the eruption into India of British textiles occurred in the context of systems of redistribution and ideologies of taste that could promote or retard the development of a utilitarian perception of commodities in the market. Again Gandhi's movement, although as leftists continually assert, fully committed to the notion of private property, was decidedly anti-capitalist as far as relations between people and things, people and producers, were concerned. Obviously, questions of value and community have never been wholly banished from the market even in capitalist societies, witness recent 'Buy British' and 'Buy American' campaigns. But the intricacy of

relations reflected by the transactional role of commodities in rural India was of a different order. And if many of the attitudes demonstrated in this chapter have begun to disappear, it is the very recent mechanization of production through factories, rather than pre-colonial merchants or the colonial state, that has effected the transformation.

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66. Ibid., p. 120.
67. A. Coomaraswamy, *Art and Swadeshi* (Madras, n.d.), p. 3.
68. Ibid.
69. H. and U. Mukherjee (eds), *India's Fight for Freedom or the Swadeshi Movement, 1905–6* (Calcutta, 1908), p. 203.
70. *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, 16–17 October 1905.
71. *Bande Mataram*, 10 October 1907.
72. *Amrita Bazaar Patrika*, 10 August 1905; *Abhyudaya* (Allahabad), 19 March, 2 April 1906.
73. Dr S. Bose, of Tufts University, has kindly sent me the following note on the 'Mota Kapar' ethic in Bengal at the turn of the century:

    At the turn of this century, with the rise of swadeshi, we find a deliberate

effort to propagate the virtues of *mota kapar*—the thick, unrefined, homespun cloth—as part of a philosophy of simple living ensuring loyalty to the mother country. This obviously had as its background the damage done to the indigenous refined cloth industry in the nineteenth century and the invasion of the home market by foreign milled cloth. The psychological attachment to the older light and sophisticated varieties, notably silks, with their connotations of ritual purity, as well as the new attraction to the glitter of manufactured commodities, had to be broken.

A number of rustic composers and singers and also a few more sophisticated poets tried to preach the new message. Most of their songs were written between 1903 and 1908. The best known of the rustic singers is Charankabi Mukundadas.

Mota literally means thick or rough, but *mota kapar* had a wider range of connotations—it was thick and unrefined but also simple and homely cloth. In fact, *mota chal*, mota kapar (coarse, simple rice and thick, homely cloth) and *mota khabo, mota porbo* (we will eat mota and wear mota) went together. One of the best-known swadeshi couplets on cloth goes:

Ma-er deya mota kapar, mathay tule ne re bhai,
Ma je amar deen-daridara, et beshi aaj sadhya nai.
The Mother has given us this simple cloth, wear it with pride,
She is poor and destitute today and can afford no more.

The following is a free translation of a song that amounts to a simple but comprehensive summary of the mota khabo, mota porbo, attitude. It is by Rajanikanto Sen, quite well known as a composer of swadeshi and devotional songs.

We may be poor, we may be small,
But we are a nation of seven crores [seventy million]; brothers, wake up
Defend your homes, protect your shops,
Don't let the grain from our barns be looted.
We will eat our own coarse grain and wear the rough, homespun cloth.
What do we care for lavender and imported trinkets.
Foreigners drain away our Mother's milk,
Will we simply stand and watch?
Don't lose this opportunity, brothers,
Come and congregate at the feet of the Mother.
Giving away from our own homes and begging from foreigners
We will not buy the fragile glass, it breaks so easily.
We will rather be poor and live our simple lives,
No one can then rob us of our self-respect.
Don't lose this opportunity, brothers,
Come and congregate at the feet of the Mother.

In another very famous song, Charankabi Mukundadas exhorts the women of Bengal to throw away their silk and glass bangles. He asks them not to be deceived by the false glitter of imported goods and not to wear *kalanka* (shame)

instead of *shankha* (the white *shank* bangle, symbol of chastity). That they don't have real gold bangles is hardly a cause for morning, he tells them. The daughters of Bengal must see to it that the Mother's wealth is not drained away any further.

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77. Ibid., p. 49.
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7

The Pre-history of 'Communalism'? Religious Conflict in India, 1700–1860*

Current events are always likely to turn academic and public interest back to the well-worn topic of conflict between members of India's major religions. The manner in which antagonism between Bengali immigrants and local people in Assam has taken on the form of a strife between communities, the revival of Sikh militancy, even the film 'Gandhi'—all these will keep the issue on the boil. There are more scholarly reasons for awakened interest also. The rapid expansion of work on Indian Islam pioneered by scholars such as S.A.A. Rizvi,[1] Imtiaz Ahmed[2] and Barbara Metcalf[3] has given us a new awareness of the structure and attitudes of Indian Muslim learned classes and sufis which inevitably reopens questions about the ideological component in

*This chapter, originally published in *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 2 (1985), 177–203, has been discussed in this book on pp. 44–9. Aspects of it were attacked by G. Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990) and by Veena Das, *Mirrors of Violence. Communities, Riots and Survivors in South Asia* (Delhi, 1990); these works and the original article were further critiqued by R. O'Hanlon, 'Historical Approaches to Communalism: Perspectives from Western India', in P. Robb (ed.), *Society and Ideology. Essays Presented to Professor Kenneth Ballhatchet* (Delhi, 1993), pp. 247–86. Another important recent addition to the literature was Sandria B. Freitag, *Collective Action and Community. Public Arenas and the Emergence of Communalism in North India* (Berkeley, 1989). The existence of 'discourses of difference' and religious hostility alongside and within a framework of syncretism in pre-colonial India seems difficult to deny. These involved intradoctrinal polemic and also the categorization of groups of people as 'polluted', 'beyond the pale', and so on. That these fractures did not, however, solidify into generalized, stable and mutually hostile assumed ethnicities is also difficult to deny, and a careful reading of this chapter (denied it by the two critics mentioned above) will make it clear that it was never intended to suggest that they did. Earlier conflicts did, however, provide a pool of experiences, polemic and

communal consciousness. Nearer the theme of this chapter, the work of Dr Sandria Freitag has provided valuable new insight into the popular mentalities which informed Hindu and Muslim behaviour in cases where violence occurred as a result of clashing religious festivals in Indian cities.[4]

What remains striking, however, is the unanimity with which scholars have accepted that the quality and incidence of communal violence changed dramatically in the last third of the nineteenth century. The reasons given for this change of tempo are very diverse. Some scholars still hold to more or less sophisticated versions of the 'divide and rule' theory—that the British raised Muslim communalism as a counterweight to emerging Indian nationalism. Others, like Peter Hardy, emphasize the slow diffusion of more intransigent, 'revivalist' streams of Hinduism and Islam, which originated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but were vitalized by the spread of communications after 1860.[5] The old 'Cambridge school', myself included, emphasized the importance of new arenas of local power in which local social conflicts could be played out.[6] Dr Freitag sees the period 1880–1930 as the crucial one when 'religious' conflict over the boundaries of local practice during festivals became abstracted to a new form of group identity in which affiliation, not practice, was the justification of strife. Even

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symbolism on which the later 'communalisms' could draw. *Pace* Pandey, these 'communal' mentalities were never monolithic in the twentieth century either. While politicians from the mid-1930s may have appeared to treat 'Hindus', 'Muslims' and 'Sikhs' as united blocs, in the villages and small towns, people's identities may still have been as unstable and malleable is they had been earlier. This point Pandey misrepresents as an argument for 'continuity'; it is obvious that the context of 'high politics' and administration had changed massively since the eighteenth century.

Another purpose of the chapter was to demonstrate the wide range of riots and disturbances between religious groups in early-nineteenth-century north Indian cities. This was fully developed by Katherine Prior in her Cambridge Ph.D. dissertation of 1990, 'The British Administration of Hinduism in North India, 1780–1900', part of which was published as 'Making History: The State's Intervention in Urban Religious Disputes in the North-Western Provinces in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, XXVII, 1 (1993), pp. 179–203.

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Pakistani historians who adhere to the notion that Hindus and Muslims had always been 'two nations' tend to argue that Muslim identity was given a great fillip at the end of the nineteenth century by pan-Islamism.

All these theories rest to some extent on assumptions about the nature of, often the absence of, communal conflict before 1860 which remain largely untested. The unfortunate Emperor Aurangzeb has taken a beating at the hands of non-Pakistani historians for his supposed divergence from the pre-colonial Hindu–Muslim synthesis, but otherwise the existence of religious riots before the late nineteenth century has hardly been considered.

My interest in this theme was awakened in the first place by finding in the course of other research fairly extensive documentary evidence of Hindu–Muslim riots in north Indian cities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Their origins and form seemed remarkably similar to those of the riots in the later half of the century. This in itself raised questions about the novelty of the events after the Rebellion of 1857. Next, a number of similar events came to light outside north India in Calcutta and Surat. But most interesting, the Company period disturbances pointed back in turn to a range of conflicts which had taken place in the mid-eighteenth century, when new regional states were forming in the wake of a weakening Mughal central authority.

Discussions of the causes of religious and communal riots have always run into severe problems of logic and method. First, it is important to avoid the danger of assuming that whenever Hindus and Muslims or Sikhs and Muslims were in conflict, a significant number of people saw these events in 'communal' terms. Certainly, it is not justifiable to class conflicts as religious or communal simply because the antagonists predominantly had different religious affiliations. In all the cases discussed below, however, there is adequate evidence that participants and observers both recognized that subjective matters of religious affiliation *did* in fact represent a significant, if not exclusive, issue in the conflicts.

Second, there is the question whether a distinction should be drawn between 'religious conflicts'—disputes over symbols, rites and precedents—and 'communal conflicts' in which broader aspects of a group's social, economic and political life were perceived as being unified and marked off from others by religious affiliation. Such a distinction must obviously be highly subjective, but the cases cited below seem to contain examples of both types. There are cases of conflict limited to closely defined issues such as the priority of festivals and the location of

mosques. But there are also cases where religious symbols appear to mark off, mobilize and sustain communities over much longer periods. Yet there is no clear development in time from closely defined 'religious' disputes to a broader perception of communities in conflict.

This leads on to a third issue: the question whether there existed or was coming to exist a broader Hindu or Muslim or Sikh 'consciousness' and if such consciousness did exist, the extent to which it provided an impetus to conflict between groups. There is certainly a growing body of sophisticated literature which demonstrates that some forces were tending in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to create areas of greater ideological and practical uniformity within the broad boundaries of religious affiliation. Thus among Muslims the spread of purist beliefs connected with teachers such as Shah Waliullah and Shah Abdul Aziz was such a force, influencing the learned and common people well beyond Delhi.[7] Again the growing convergence between the mystical and scholarly branches of Islam gave elite teachers greater access to the masses.[8] So, too, the expansion of the power of a locally rooted Muslim gentry after 1650 and the decentralization of power from Delhi to provincial centres after 1700 spread pockets of purist Islamic practice both deeper and more widely across the face of Indian society. An autonomous desire for reputation, religion and respectability among Muslim artisans ensured a popular interest in these new currents.[9] Among Hindus, too, there were some developments which tended to greater uniformity within the great range of beliefs and practice. The expansion of heavily endowed Vaishnavite sects such as the Ramanandis[10] influenced large areas of north Indian Hinduism while newly emergent Hindu states provided a good medium for the spread of a more ritualistic and Brahminical type of religion.

However, there are three points to be made when one tries to relate these changes to the incidence of tension between different communities.[11] First, the impact of such changes in consciousness can easily be exaggerated. They were predominantly an urban and small-town phenomena and left vast areas of customary religious practice untouched. Second, powerful and articulate religious movements which tended to suppress differences between the major religious traditions flourished contemporarily with the more purist ones (Bengal Vaishnavism and the followers of Kabir in north India, for instance). Third, even if the unilinear growth of a more homogeneous Hindu or Muslim consciousness can be postulated (which seems doubtful), it is not the case that this necessarily gave rise to overt conflict or to the development of hostile

communities. Thus, for instance, Delhi which was the major centre of Waliullah revival and resort of powerful and pious Hindu and Jain commercial groups, was relatively free of Hindu–Muslim tension throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[12]

From the outset, then, it must be clear that this chapter is not seeking to resurrect surreptitiously any simplistic 'two nation' theory. Yet the opposite is also true. If religious revitalization did not necessarily give rise to religious or communal conflict, it is also the case that the widespread Hindu–Muslim symbiosis of the pre-colonial and early colonial periods did not totally exclude the possibility of riot and disturbance along communal lines. When and how religious riots occurred in a predominantly syncretic culture is therefore the major concern of this chapter. But in order to demonstrate that there is a question at issue, one must first dispense with the notion, fostered by some colonial writers and by Maratha and Muslim communalists of the present century,[13] that eighteenth-century Indian powers, particularly the Sikhs, Marathas and Mysore, were committed to exclusive strategies of religious revivalism. Only when the extent of interpenetration between the major religious traditions during the eighteenth century is appreciated does it become possible to ask questions concerning conflicts between their adherents.

Eighteenth-century Religious Syncretism

The imperatives of regional and local state building during the eighteenth century and the flexible, all-India warrior society to which they gave rise both tended to confirm and to newly create relationships between the religious practices of the major faiths. Until the very last years of the eighteenth century the umbrella of Mughal legitimacy was hardly shaken. Kingship, essential for the building of a coherent body of supporters, retained its character as redistribution, protection and incorporation in the localities, even for rulers who challenged the *political* dominance of the Mughals or the Islamic religion. As the Maratha war chiefs turned their eyes to north India after 1740 they, too, were domesticated into a Mughal life-style. Maratha temples incorporated Islamic features; Maratha chiefs were painted in court dress by Mughal miniaturists. To a face-to-face local sovereignty trying to stabilize itself in the context of the armed camp, association with the sufi concept of charisma (*barkat*) inherent in the holy man was particularly appropriate. Muslim rulers had often tried in life or death to associate themselves closely with saints, perhaps because their participation in the transcendent

sovereignty of the Khilafat was so distant. The Maratha chiefs did the same. Thus the saint Mansur Shah was mentor (pir) of the great war-leader Mahaji Scindia, and also his chief companion.[14] Twenty years after Mahaji's death his son Daulat Rao Scindia prostrated himself before Mansur Shah's son, Bala Qadir, before commencing Hindu worship. At the death ceremonies of Mansur Shah, the Maratha warrior nobility made offerings to Bala Qadir while Muslim holy men of any origin were always welcome in the Maratha camp.[15] There were many similar examples. The Scindias and Holkars, more famed today for their construction of bathing *ghāt*s in Benares, were considerable donors to the Pirzadas of Sheikh Moin-ud-Din Chishti at Ajmere.[16]

Such syncretic practices were common among other small Hindu chieftains establishing themselves in the wake of the declining Empire, but it still remains interesting to see how general it was among powers whose acts and public pronouncements often had a decidedly anti-Mughal character. Nor was it only the mystical branch of Islamic practice which was associated with the new warrior rulers. Ranjit Singh consolidating his kingdom after 1800 continued to associate himself with the militant tradition of the Sikh Khalsa, issuing his coins in the name of its central council of chieftains, the Gurumutta.[17] But at the same time he was content to secure tribute from, rather than obliterate, the power of the Gillanee and Bukhara Sayyids in view of the reverence that the Muslims of the Punjab showed them.[18] When Ranjit assumed a royal title for the first time in 1801, he was careful to have Muslim learned men present in court to validate his claim to the title of agent of god, or *sirkar*, which implicitly rejected the Mughal's authority. At the same time he appointed Nizamuddin kazi and head of all the Muslims of the Lahore region who recognized his legitimacy,[19] and thus fulfilled one of the key criteria if the Punjab was to remain Dar-ul-Islam, a land in which Islam could be publicly practised.

On the other side, emerging Muslim regional states were equally concerned to link themselves to major Hindu shrines and festivals, though this was a more surreptitious process than among the Hindu rulers. Barnett has emphasized the extent to which the nawabs of Awadh came to rest on the compliance of groups of Hindu and converted Hindu warriors, administrators and revenue farmers.[20] While the middle nawabs fostered a peculiarly Shia court culture, withdrawing patronage from a number of Sunni shrines and endowments, they were careful to maintain indirect links with major Hindu centres. Substantial donations of land grants were received from the nawabs by the Vaishnavite priests

and Gosains of Muttra and Ajodhya, while in a move comparable with Akbar's Hindu–Muslim synthesis, Asaf-ud-Daulah offered direct aid to the monotheistic Hindu reformer Jagjivan Das of Kotwa, founder of the Satnami sect.[21] The allusive and indirect manner in which Muslim rulers were constrained to make connections with Hindu temples and festivals is particularly well illustrated in the case of the Arcot regime of south India. The *Tuzak-i-Wallajahi* records how the nawabs customarily went the rounds of the Islamic saints' places thus binding themselves to the sacred geography of the region. At the same time, annual gifts to the pious people of Mecca and Medina caused the nawab's name to be mentioned there 'next to that of the Sultan of Rum'. Yet even the pious court chronicler was aware that in parallel with this obeisance to the tradition of the central Islamic lands went a sedulous effort to foster links with the majority Hindu population. The Nawab became the protector of the great Hindu temples of Chidambaram and Tirupati. He also made special provision for, and reverence to, the most syncretic of the south Indian *dargah*s, the shrine of Shahul Hamid Sahib at Nagore. Moreover, 'As it was commonly believed by the Hindus, Muslims and others that Salambar had been the resting place of the prophet Sulayman (on him be peace) he gave presents to the inhabitants, honoured them and made them feel happy.'[22]

While this style of sacred incorporation had been common to all previous Hindu kingdoms and had influenced Muslim rulers since the time of Akbar, the emergence of an all-India military culture was particularly favourable to these syncretic tendencies. Soldiers were necessarily distanced from the orthodoxy of the *ulama* and purism of the Brahmin; the warband relied on tactical alliances, buying in skills by participation in local schemes of redistribution on an ad hoc basis. Kolff has noted how mobile Rajput warbands of the early Mughal period kept Muslim women in their harems to the annoyance of the orthodox ulama.[23] Hindu and Muslim commanders in later Mughal campaigns made special provision for the prayers of both religions on their marches, and a Jain Urdu temple was constructed close to the Red Fort to accommodate Jains serving with the imperial forces.[24] While the ideological movements within Islam in the late eighteenth century led by the disciples of Shah Waliullah and the Naqshbandi sufis of the Delhi area may have been directed to some extent against syncretic practices, it must be remembered that the comradeship of an increasingly complex warrior culture pointed in precisely the opposite direction. By 1780 most regional armies had contingents of Afghan horsemen or Lukhnavi

swordsmen while the Bairagi and Gosain ascetics had become the most powerful single military force north of the Kavery. Pindari bands were composed of Hindus and Muslims and appear to have developed a syncretic popular religion in which the goddess Kali featured alongside Muslim saints as the object of veneration. Muslim *fakir*s and Hindu *sannyasi*s were auspicious and welcome frequenters of armed camps, often playing a crucial role in the military politics of alliance and bargaining over pay and conditions. The Rohillas who built up bodies of political support from slave castes of converted Hindu Rajputs had a particular interest in honouring the religion of their Hindu feudatories. Conversely, the patronage of great revenue-farmer magnates such as Almas Ali Khan encouraged specialist Hindu agriculturalist castes such as Kurmis, Kacchis and Malis to introduce aspects of Islamic religious symbolism into their caste life-styles and caste regalia. Indeed, the emergence of sharper boundaries between Hindu and Muslim religious practice in the period after 1820 must to some extent be attributed to the decline of this mobile and eclectic warrior culture.

Thus far we seem to have been giving a somewhat embellished picture of the conventional pre-colonial symbiosis between Hindu and Muslim. Even the late eighteenth century, a much vaunted period of Muslim revival and purification, displays quite contradictory features in popular practice. For this reason, it is most important to take note of the many striking examples of religious conflict scattered throughout the record of this period and put them into some sort of interpretative framework.

State Communalism?

The argument has been that the consolidation of regional states in the course of the eighteenth century tended generally to strengthen the bonds of patronage and veneration across the boundaries of the major religions. Yet this was not always the case. Aurangzeb's own retreat to a firmer restatement of the Muslim law along with the imposition of taxes on Hindus and the destruction of Hindu temples has been interpreted as an attempt to reformulate the ideological basis of the late-Mughal state in line with its requirement for constant military expansion. This also seems a plausible interpretation for the most aggressive example of eighteenth-century 'state communalism', the military despotism of Tipu Sultan in Mysore.[25] Tipu's attacks on one temple in Seringapatam, the Hindu culture of the Kerala Nayar aristocracy, and the Portuguese and Syrian Christian populations associated with the

European settlements of the Malabar coast, were acts of policy rather than examples of mindless 'fanaticism' as early British observers characterized them. Mysore temple priests were too closely tied to the Hindu Wodiyar house which Hyder Ali and Tipu Sultan had replaced; the Nayars formed a dangerous body of recalcitrant feudatories on Mysore's western borders, and the Christians were the symbol of dependency on external trade and European influence which both sultans saw as the Achilles heel of their state. Yet despite their increasingly Islamic style of pronouncement neither of these rulers could afford to establish a real jihad (holy war) state. Lokika or 'administrative' Brahmins inevitably provided much of Mysore's bureaucracy and bewailed its later destruction by the British.[26] Moreover, tribal warrior communities such as the Bedars who were indirectly linked to the great Hindu temple complex of Tirupati formed an important element in Tipu's army. Many temples were carefully patronized by the sultans.[27]

Early-nineteenth-century Awadh displayed similar features. The later nawabs strengthened the emphasis of the dynasty's founders on a specifically Shia form of Islamic polity.[28] When the Awadh ruler threw off Mughal sovereignty and became King of Awadh he also brought Shia theologians directly into the administration.[29] Undoubtedly, growing Shia political influence in north India was partly responsible for the aggressive Sunni response of authorities such as Qazi Thana'ullah Uthmani and Shah Abdul Aziz. The resurgence of polemic between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam in the late eighteenth century was associated with a spate of conversions to Shi'ism in the Panipat region near Delhi[30] which reflected the influence of Persian noblemen there and perhaps the propinquity of trade routes to Shia Iran. After 1790, when the Lucknow court began more openly to emphasize its Shia status, pamphlet polemics between Delhi theologians and leading Shias such as Sayyid Dildar Ali (who received extensive patronage in Lucknow) became sharper. Finally, against the background of Awadh's final political crisis and annexation religious debate was transformed into social conflict between members of the sects. By the 1860s riots had begun to occur at the small-town headquarters of leading ulama, such as Nasirabad.[31] The tension between Shia officials and the predominantly Sunni population of major towns also appears to have complicated relations with Hindus which deteriorated sharply with rioting in Lucknow in 1847, 1853 and 1856.[32] The Awadh state's attempt to strengthen itself by emphasizing its Shia adherence was, in fact, a costly mistake. Without it, scholarly debate need not have given rise to the

communal conflict which continued to embitter Sunni–Shia relations in Lucknow.

Sovereignty and Worship at the Holy Places

Yet the occasions when rulers encouraged or initiated conflict through attempts to establish an official orthodoxy were rare. More often in the eighteenth century it was much more limited aims which gave rise to the appearance of religious conflict. Rulers or powerful groups within newly emergent states attempted merely to re-draw boundaries within an accepted framework of religious compromise. They insisted not on the exclusiveness but on the primacy (or merely the equality) of their form of worship. Thus Hindu and Sikh rulers in the late eighteenth century sought generally not so much to attack a homogeneous Muslim community as to establish their own status as donors-in-chief and as protectors of the major cult centres of their own faiths. The demand that they should have ceremonial primacy at temples and holy places without the intervention of any form of Muslim sovereignty reflects Hindu principles of belief which stress that direct interaction with the gods improves embodied rank.[33] Sacrifice is marred or is at least less efficacious when on land where another is sovereign.[34] Freeing the holy places from Muslim domination was therefore quite compatible with eclectic religious practice in other spheres: it embodied no statement about Muslim religion or the Muslim community such as might be expressed in the term 'communalism'.

Let us take some samples from those social and political movements which have already appeared as eclectic, syncretic, or flexible in their relationships to individual Muslim shrines or ulama. Madhav Rao Peshwa, for instance, several times recorded his desire to drive Muslims from Malwa and Gujarat in order to become protector of the major shrines in those territories. His will of 1772 explicitly enjoins the conquest of Hindu holy places on his successor. The successor should first pay his debts, thus ensuring the spiritual continuity of the family; next, lighten and modify the land revenue in the Maratha domains, putting legitimate rule on a firmer foundation. But then he is urged to free Prayag (Allahabad) and Benares from Muslim control as a prerequisite for the pilgrimage of the dead Peshwa's mother to the holy cities, and obsequies of his uncle there, and the establishment of hereditary stipends for the cities' Brahmins.[35] The notion of a united Hindu religious community does indeed enter here, but only in a limited sense: the freeing of a holy place where the sacrifices of all Hindus have merit (because in

theory Benares and Gaya belong to the sovereignty of Shivaj will increase the efficacy of all Hindu worship in its turn. But pronouncements such as this do not imply the existence of any ethnic or community-based sense of religious war.

Wherever Muslim states conceded effective sovereignty to Hindus or Sikhs, strenuous efforts were made to stop the slaughter of sacred cattle by Muslim butchers. This again asserted the right of the non-Muslim sovereigns to protect and gain merit from association with these sacred beasts. It is interesting that the only recorded acts of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which could be considered anti-Muslim were the banning of cattle slaughter throughout his domains and an order to desist from public calling to prayers in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar. His sovereignty was considered incompatible with the public assertion that Amritsar was an Islamic city and with open cow slaughter.[36] Otherwise, as we have seen, his policies were directed to building up a core of support among Punjabi Muslims.

Much the most interesting illustration of this theme of sovereignty over religious places comes from an earlier period of Sikh history. In efforts to stamp out the religious and political threat of Sikhism, Aurangzeb had carried out a relentless policy of repression against the sect. He had personally ordered the execution of the Sikh Guru Tej Bahadur, while his governor for the city of Multan had earlier killed the wife of Guru Govind Singh. These incidents assumed great symbolic significance in the ideology of the Sikhs and vengeance for them was a key aim in all subsequent relations with the Mughal throne and north Indian Muslims. When the Sikhs conquered Sirhind in 1764 they made a deliberate policy of destroying every building, including its mosques. An early-nineteenth-century observer noted that in the town of Sirhind 'to this day it is deemed a meritorious act in a Sikh to pull down from a standing wall three bricks and convey them to the Sutlej or Jumuna'.[37] To raze Delhi to the ground when it was conquered in 1783 was, however, neither politic nor possible. The Sikhs, it is true, succeeded in destroying the Rikabganj mosque, near to the place where Guru Tej Bahadur was cremated, and replacing it with a *gurdwara*. But both here and in the case of the Sisganj mosque, where the Guru had been executed, there were elements of compromise with the local Muslim community. The Sikh leader Baghel Singh authorized attacks by his followers on the rural landholdings of leading members of the Delhi Muslim aristocracy to force them to *agree* to the demolition of the Rikabganj mosque. The use of force is perhaps less surprising than the

fact that the Sikhs were seeking a formal acceptance of the act by the Muslim leadership and its legitimation by the powerless Emperor. In the case of the Sisganj mosque which was located near the *kotwali* and the heart of the Muslim city, the Sikhs and Hindus who supported them were fought to a symbolic draw. A gurdwara was built adjacent to the place of the Guru's execution which was located by an ancient Hindu water carrier who remembered the spot. But this did not involve the destruction of the mosque: instead the gurdwara was constructed inside the mosque compound.[38]

A similar delicate compromise was effected in the case of the state visit of the Sikh leader to the Mughal Emperor.[39] Hoping to capitalize on his remaining legitimacy, the Emperor had called for an audience with Baghel Singh. But the Sikhs had customarily pledged themselves never to bow before the Mughal Emperor or to accept his sovereignty. Nevertheless, an agreement was reached which satisfied both parties. The Sikh leader was to approach the imperial presence surrounded by his own troops, fanned with peacock feathers, the symbol of royalty. In deference to the Sikh religion Muslim butchers were to be moved out of the quarters through which he passed; introduced to the Emperor he should say 'Sat Sri Akal' rather than the customary words of submission. On the other hand, Baghel Singh's cavalcade was to be headed by Mughal mace bearers, ceremonial gifts were to be offered and received, and a Mughal chamberlain was to do obeisance on behalf of the Sikhs, thus avoiding a personal obeisance by Baghel Singh.

These incidents provide a key for understanding the nature of much religious conflict in the pre-colonial period. Savage destruction and slaughter could take place between groups who continued to venerate the shrines and holy figures of each other's traditions, but fought strenuously for immediate sovereignty over holy places. Sikhs may sometimes have vilified Muslims as 'Turks', but it seems unlikely that any monolithic 'communal' identity existed or was in the process of emerging.[40] Most important in view of the currency of teleological views about Hindu and Islamic revivalism, there was no necessary or unambiguous connection between purification and fundamentalist movements within these faiths and the likelihood of conflicts between them. Thus, for instance, the saints of the Chishti revival in the Punjab appear to have extended their influence more rapidly than the purist Naqshbandiya of Delhi precisely because their beliefs accorded more with those of the syncretic rural society of the Punjab. Yet it was these teachers and not initially the reforming Delhi ulama associated with the tradition of Shah

Waliullah who provided the most stubborn opposition to the rise of Sikh secular power.[41]

'Land Wars' and Communalism

So far we have been concerned with situations where religious buildings and festivals were the chief objects of conflict and where rulers played an important part in originating and compromising disputes. This class of 'religious conflict' can, however, be set apart from cases where economic or social conflict occurred predominantly between groups with different religious affiliations, and where such disputes came to be seen as conflicts between religious communities as such, or to be expressed in the vocabulary of 'communal' antagonism. These 'communal' conflicts might cause or exacerbate strife over temples, mosques and festivals, but they derived from broader social antagonisms. Yet when using the term 'communal' it is important to stress that no unified ethnic consciousness is being postulated, and certainly no teleology by which the conflicts of this period broaden out to provide the background for Hindu–Muslim or Hindu–Sikh contention in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

One important example of such conflict was what might be called the 'land wars' between Hindu and Sikh zamindars and Mughal tenure-holders in the course of the eighteenth century. The background to these rural conflicts was the slow expansion during the Mughal period of land rights held by literate gentry and court servants who were predominantly of Muslim aristocratic origin. Indian Muslim families had long been established in rural towns closely associated with the shrines of sufi saints and colonies of Muslim artisans. Such communities had provided jurists, officials and military leaders for the emerging state machinery of Muslim India. But it appears to have been quite late that the gentry–literati began to acquire substantial *zamindari* rights around their rural seats or to build up significant holdings of *madad-i-maash* or other privileged tenures. At late as in 1590, Muslims held only small patches as zamindars in Awadh and the Ganges–Jumna Doab. In Hardoi District, for instance, where there was a large number of famous Islamic towns in Akbar's time, Muslims held as proprietors only part of the town of Bilgram and about fifty villages elsewhere. By 1860, however, they held as many as 1445 in Sitapur Division, and that was rather less than the total had been in 1800. In the late eighteenth century Sheikh families may have held proprietary rights in as many as two-thirds of the Awadh villages and made significant contributions to the economy of the area

by putting in wells and planting grove lands. The build up of rural Muslim power (apparently a feature of the Punjab also) resulted from a slow process by which the proceeds of military and clerical salaries were invested in land rights, the clearing and settlement of marginal lands and the creation of new markets and town quarters.[42] But after 1690 a new feature was added. In the early days of Mughal supremacy the emperors had set their faces against their servants building up areas of landholding beneath the system of transferable *jagir*s. But from this time on, as Muzaffar Alam shows, Delhi began to connive at the expansion of the power of local gentry and madad-i-maash holders. Local Muslim magnates were allowed to assimilate the weak and non-hereditary privileged tenures given for service or sanctity into the stronger zamindari rights, thus giving a stronger basis for their power as hereditary landowners. This policy appears to have been an element in Aurangzeb's 'tilt' towards Islam and an effort to build up local support against the power of 'refractory' Hindu zamindars.[43]

The consolidation of this overwhelmingly Muslim gentry appears to have been a largely peaceful process, as a later official put it, 'the slow accumulation of thrift and diplomacy exercised on a more simple people'. It was materially advanced by the fact that Muslim gentry families usually dominated the offices of kazi and the lower administration both in the late Empire and the eighteenth-century successor states.[44] But as Muzaffar Alam notes: 'In Awadh in a number of cases, the hostility of the Rajput zamindars was directed against the Muslim madad-i-maash holders who had begun to behave as zamindars by the beginning of the eighteenth century.'[45] Documents from western Awadh towns mostly concern disputes between factions composed of both Hindus and Muslims, but there were also a number of cases of violent conflict which took the form of local battles between Hindus and Muslims. A representation of the third regional year of Farrukhsiyar, for instance, records the attack of Sukha, Bacchu and Uday Singh, residents of village Pachuan and others on the Sayyid proprietors of village Ahror. The Rajputs attacked the village which had been granted as madad-i-maash to the Sayyids, murdered three landlords, burnt five women alive and demolished all the houses one by one. They then plundered six other villages and laid waste the revenue-free lands attached to them, 'turning the graveyards belonging to the plaintiffs into culturable land'.[46] The destruction of the graveyards was, of course, a straightforward piece of communal savagery unmitigated by any search for local compromise.

Attacks of this sort seem to have grown in violence and generality

throughout the eighteenth century, culminating in mass assaults of Sikh zamindars and peasants on Muslim holdings in the Punjab and western Hindustan. The weakening of Muslim military power provided conditions in which Hindu and Sikh country people could assert themselves against intrusive elements which they saw as local agents of the state revenue-collecting machinery. Habib must be right in stating that in the western areas south of Delhi or in the Deccan this rural reaction represented the response of an impoverished rural society to the pressure of an inexorable revenue machinery. But my impression bears out that of Muzaffar Alam in seeing this widely as the rising of a prosperous and increasingly self-confident zamindari against alien competitors. It came from areas such as Baiswara and the Benares region which were apparently secure and becoming increasingly commercialized. In the Punjab, too, it was substantial Jat zamindars west of Delhi who took up the Sikh war-cry and set out to destroy the Muslim gentry in the second half of the century, rather than the younger sons from the desert regions who had been prominent earlier.

What made these land wars 'communal'? First, the nature of the Mughal state and administration ensured that the majority of holders of privileged tenures such as madad-i-maash were Muslims or Islamized Hindu clerical groups such as Khattris or Kayasthas, while their local competitors were members of the great Hindu agricultural castes: Jats, Bhumihars or Rajputs. Second, the form of these land wars was often a savage attack by the totality of rural society against the small-town headquarters of the Muslim gentry. In the Punjab there are cases of the obliteration of the old Muslim towns and their replacement by totally new semi-urban settlements under the complete control of the local Sikh warrior lineages. In these attacks the demolition of mosques, graveyards and sufi shrines along with the houses and groves of the Muslim gentry seems to have been a prime objective.[47] These religious symbols after all formed the heart of the rural Muslim communities, the outposts of the lowest level of imperial official and the most tangible representation of the process of Islamization. The Sikh attacks of 1764 on the upper Ganges Doab were directed quite precisely against the strongholds of the Barah Sayyids who were the classic exemplar of Muslim gentry formation.[48] Many small incidents of deliberate religious harassment were recorded. A large Sikh band attacked village Jalalabad, for instance, because its Muslim coparceners were alleged to have mistreated a Hindu girl; the headman was burnt alive and the village sacked.[49] In the Punjab, again, it had been the deliberate desecration of

Muslim buildings and mosques which had forced Hafiz Jamal Multani, one of the major leaders of the Chishti revival, to emerge from meditation in his retreat, declare holy war and display his efficiency as an archer against the massing Sikhs.[50] In all these conflicts the vocabulary of religious conflict was freely used: 'Wah Guru' was answered by 'Allahu Akbar'; Sikhs sought to extirpate 'Turks' while Muslims fought 'idolatry' with their ancient battery of abuse.

The tendency of such land wars to take on the lineaments of communal conflict and to assimilate religious symbols was common throughout the period. Sayyid Ahmed of Rai Bareilly's conflict with Sikh authority in the 1820s was assimilated to older tribal wars in the area west of Peshawar. In Kerala[51] and Bengal,[52] by contrast, themes of religious militancy became enmeshed with conflicts between Muslim peasantry and their Hindu landlords during the well-known Moplah and Faraizi outbreaks. Even during the Rebellion of 1857, in the eastern Gangetic area local social conflict sometimes took on a communal aspect. In Rohilkhand, for instance, the so-called Mutiny often seems to have involved attacks by rural Hindu peasant castes on Muslim small towns during which the green flag was raised and deliberate assaults were made on the Muslim quarters of the rural seats.[53] Two conclusions emerge from this. First, that there are no grounds for the common assumption that communal violence in the countryside was only an 'export from the towns' in the course of the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Second, the widely attested syncretism of rural religion, which received encouragement from the state in the course of the eighteenth century, by no means excluded the possibility of communal conflict where lines of religious division happened to coincide with deep economic antagonisms. Communal violence was not incompatible with eclectic religious practice as the orthodox nationalist view of communalism has so often contended.

Strife in the Towns

Until recently little was known about conflict in Indian cities before 1860, but fragmentary evidence has now begun to accumulate, revealing a long history of violence associated with clashing religious festivals and disputed mosques and temples. The well-documented events of the late nineteenth century look more and more like a continuation of these trends rather than harbingers of a new era of 'communal identity' Many of the incidents of religious strife in the years 1700–1860 occurred when ruling groups sought, as shown, to renegotiate the boundaries of local

religious practice. But others appear to have been more spontaneous, reflections of severe local economic change which became confounded with ceremonial or religious disputes. S.A.A. Rizvi has collected evidence on conflicts in the Mughal cities of north India about which little is known. One feature that stands out from his account is the participation in them of mercenary soldiers from outside the locality or even from outside India. I have suggested that eighteenth-century military culture in the broadest sense encouraged syncretic religious practice across religious boundaries. But smaller uncontrolled bodies of soldiers quartered in an unfamiliar urban environment may sometimes have formed the centre of violent disturbances. In the riot at Ahmedabad in the second year of Farrukhsiyar's reign, for instance, when rioting broke out against Muslim cow slaughter, it was Afghan soldiers of the Mughal governor of the city who took a leading part in the attack on the Hindu quarters of the city.[54] Several riots broke out in Delhi, Agra and Kashmir during the early 1720s. Here again the sparks appear to have been struck by disputes over Holi, Muhurram and Id festivities, but Rizvi notes that new Muslim leaders such as 'Arabs and Abyssinians, Turks from Istanbul and Afghans'[55] were prominent in all of them. These military leaders, often from areas of Sunni orthodoxy, had replaced the old Irani and Turani officials who had tended to be more sympathetic to Hindu interests.

The frequent mention of Afghan soldiery in these riots is interesting. The Rohilla Afghan rulers of the eighteenth century states northeast of Delhi were later noted for their 'Sunni orthodoxy', but this did not prevent them from developing close ties of fealty and military brotherhood with the local Kutheir Rajputs. In 1774 when the Nawab of Awadh attacked Rohilkhand and Hafiz Rehmat Khan Rohilla offered resistance '. . . zamindars of the Rajput tribe, who lived in peace under his [Hafiz Rehmat's] rule, came in troops to support him without summons'.[56] Again, in the anti-British riot of 1816 in Bareilly, Hindu urban and commercial men joined the revolt of Maulvi Mahomed Ewaz, pledging to fight for both endangered religions. Mahomed Ewaz was himself a strict Naqshbandi Sunni associated with the school of Shah Abdul Aziz of Delhi, so the influence of 'Sunni orthodoxy' did not necessarily operate in the direction of Hindu–Muslim conflict.[57]

A more plausible general explanation is that small bodies of undisciplined mercenary soldiers isolated in an urban environment could easily provide the impetus for communal violence in the early stages of state building. When, however, state formation was more complete, the new

military rulers were particularly concerned to build up a solid basis of support and co-operation among their non-Muslim subjects and sought by careful control and eclectic religious patronage to avoid incidents of conflict. This line of argument also has implications for the riots and communal conflicts which occurred in many north Indian cities in the 1830s and again in the 1850s. Here again bodies of soldiery, irregular *barkandazis* and gangs of cudgel-men were prominent. At Aligarh in 1820, for instance, when a Hindu–Muslim dispute broke out at the time of Muhurram the ostensible cause was the usual jockeying about procession routes and some minor incidents between Hindu and Muslim leaders were 'led by Agra Nujeebs and chaprassies at the Collector's office'.[58] Both groups were armed irregular soldiery formed under the pre-British regimes but sometimes retained on low pay by the incoming colonial power. They were in fact prime examples of the process of 'demilitarization' which had gone on in the early decades of British rule and had fostered what William Sleeman called an 'unquiet spirit' among the large mercenary armies which had been displaced, downgraded or broken up by the new British rulers. Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan noted something similar in Bijnaur District in 1857. Communal relations had been good, he said, when the great Muslim families had employed Rajputs and other Hindus as their armed retainers. But as the great households had declined, the links had atrophied and small incidents could thus ensure that 'the tree of Hindu–Muslims aversion' grew deeper roots.[59]

One deeper social context, then, for these incidents of religious conflict was the rise and decline of warrior kingdoms and the culture they bore. As studies of European riots have shown, men of war and carriers of violence often stood at the heart of civil conflict. But it was at the point when warrior states were forming, and once again when they were in decline, that the potential for violence was greatest.

A similar consideration holds true when we consider the role of Hindu and Muslim judicial and revenue officers in cases of communal violence. Both in the record of the late Mughal period and in the years of the Company Raj the 'chief registrars' (kazis) and 'chief executive officers' of the towns (kotwals) often took a leading role in religious violence. In itself this is hardly surprising. These officers were in an ambiguous position. Their existence—particularly that of the kazi—was itself a technical criterion that the land was Dar-ul-Islam. They were thus the formal guarantors of the supremacy of Islam in the locality. At the same time, however, they were justiciars of a Mughal Empire which

in theory guaranteed its Hindu and Jain subjects some rights as protected subjects, and in practice gave them virtually equal rights out of equity. The tension between these two roles was intolerable so that when conflicts of a religious nature broke out the positions of kazi and kotwal were always compromised on one count or another.

What is more interesting is the possibility that general changes in the personnel of the function of these offices could give rise to added instability in urban arenas, and thus provide the conditions for more sustained religious conflict. In the early eighteenth century, for instance, the position of the local officials was coming under a variety of pressures. The conflict between factions at the imperial court and in the provinces representing the Indian-born Sheikhzadas and the older Irani or Turani nobility was leading to rapid changes in office holders. Many offices were being leased out or even under-leased, and powerful Hindu landowners from the hinterland were whittling away the law officers' authority by setting up their own quarters and markets in many major towns. All these conditions impinged on the resolution of religious conflicts. So in the Ahmedabad riot, the kazi of the city, who was closely connected with a notably pro-Hindu governor and was accused of ignoring Muslim interests, had his house burnt down.[60] Mughal policy was tilting towards a closer relationship with powerful Hindu commercial interests after the death of Aurangzeb and the role of the governor and his proteges among the local officials seems to have incensed the ulama. Similarly, in the Delhi riot of 1729 the kazi who was aligned with the older Shia nobility came under attack from mobs of Punjabi Muslim shoe sellers who were protected by representatives of the rising Rohilla Afghan interest in the city.[61] On the other hand, in Benares in 1752 it was the kazi who led sections of the Muslim population in the demolition of the Vishwanath temple, thus setting the scene for two hundred years of sporadic local conflict. Here, the rise of the Bhumihar dynasty after 1739 and the growing influx of Maratha wealth and power into the city had sharply tipped political power against the Muslim law officers.[62] In an earlier incident Delhi had intervened to release the Hindu population from some for the rigours of the tax on pilgrims which had been operated by the town officials. The officials saw their chance to rectify the slow erosion of their position in 1752 when the ruler of Awadh temporarily expelled the Bhumihar ruler from his city.

However, the pressures on the local law officers related to the faction fighting and decentralization of power within the later Mughal Empire were nothing to the sharp redefinition which took place in the early days

of British rule. It was this deliberate diminution of the social and judicial role of the kazi, mufti and kotwal which formed an important pre-condition for the riots in north Indian cities in the period 1820–50. The British sought to turn these officials—the guarantors of Dar-ul-Islam—into subordinate agents of the district collectors and magistrates, thus severing the link between Muslim law and the operation of local justice and politics. An officer in Allahabad in 1815 noted that 'the synodical assemblies' majlis etc. and their censures for pollution of caste, heretical conduct, debauchery, gambling, etc., are fast falling into disrepute, and not upheld by our institutions'.[63] The changing role of the Muslim law officers added to the volatility of religious disputes. Some sought to respond to decline by an uncompromising line. In Kashipur in 1833, for instance, the kazi had to be removed when he denounced a police officer as a heretic and threatened to pollute the town with cow slaughter if an unpopular compromise with the Hindus was maintained.[64] In 1838 the decline of the dominance of the Rohilla ruling group over the police and the office of kotwal seems to have encouraged Hindu leaders to bargain for a better scheme of precedence during clashing religious festivals. The magistrate responded by further diminishing the kotwal's authority in Bareilly and trying to put Hindu and Muslim leaders on a basis of 'equality' for the first time. Previous disputes had been easily settled because there was no question of representation of interests; Hindus had been protected but there was no doubt that they were in a ceremonially inferior position.

This argument fits well with the findings of Dr Freitag and others that the role of the local magistracy and the police was a crucial component in the communal riots of the late nineteenth century. Here again the nature of the police, in particular, was undergoing a further dramatic transformation as the colonial authorities sought closer control through the agency of a police force now drawn from a much broader social range.

Finally, this discussion of religious conflict in the urban setting must turn to the impact of more general economic change on the balance of power between local elites. There is no question, of course, of arguing that religious disputes can simply be 'reduced' to conflicts of material interest. Yet it is quite plain that the strains of rapid urbanization, or de-urbanization, could significantly threaten the balance of local ceremonial precedence and also provide the circumstances for wider communal identification. The evidence for the late-Mughal cities of upper India remains scarce. But it is perhaps significant that mercantile groups,[65]

and Jains above all, appear on several occasions as champions of the anti-Muslim parties. Jain and Vaishnavite merchants from Rajasthan, an area relatively unaffected by Islamic influences, were building up their power throughout the Ganges valley in the eighteenth century. Certainly in the early years of the nineteenth century it was recent migrants among the merchant people, unsure of their local status and not yet domesticated into patterns of local compromise by association with the Muslim revenue machinery, who played a most uncompromising role in local conflicts.

The record is much fuller, however, for the seaport towns where the decline of the dominant commercial groups of Mughal India was compounded by the rise of the British. Das Gupta has revealed a number of incidents of mercantile conflict in Surat where sharply defined groups of traders and shipowners appear to have perceived their economic interests in terms of community with 'Turks', 'Abyssinians', 'Bohra Muslims', 'Hindus' and 'Parsis' arrayed against each other. The decline of the Gujarati Hindu merchants and the rise of the Rustomji Parsi family under British protection, for instance, took on a distinctly communal aspect in 1734 when the inter-family dispute broadened.[66] The Muslim governor laid penalties on all of Surat's 'bania' community to please the English, while in the hinterland, the Marathas harassed all Parsis, branding them as 'worse than slaves'.

An even more interesting case occurred in Calcutta in 1789, for this was a city which has commonly been seen as free from Hindu–Muslim tension before the late nineteenth century. The occasion of violence was the clashing of Muhurram and the Durga Puja festival which caused 'the greatest tumults and riots in the bazaars for some days and have been productive of several murders'. When Muslims attacked the Durga Puja procession of Rama Kant Bannerjee, a wealthy banian, he assembled 'fifty or sixty armed peons and demolished all the Mahometan Durgahs they could find in the neighbourhood of Boitacannah'. Later a mob of about 3000 Muslims attacked the house of 'Sookmoyi Thakur' in the Bow Bazaar, plundered it of jewels, 5000 gold mohurs, Rs 8000 in Company bonds, and having killed two cows, were supposedly seen disappearing into a local Muslim school with their loot. Other Hindu houses were also attacked.[67]

In 1789 Calcutta was still an important Muslim city, and Hughly up the river retained some of its character as a Mughal port. With the European commercial growth since 1720, many clerical and artisan Muslims from Dacca and Murshidabad had migrated to the city and

together they made up about 30 per cent of its population.[68] The great beneficiaries of Calcutta's growing role in the world economy were the British and the Hindu banians who served them as agents and brokers; with the decline of trade in the hands of independent Muslim sea-captains and Mughal officials, Muslims had few rich or powerful men in the city. Against this background the clear undertone of class conflict in these riots is explicable: it was particularly the houses of rich Banians which were attacked, and straightforward plundering was more in evidence than in many religious riots, alongside the examples of deliberate sacrilege. For their part the new Hindu rich were asserting sovereignty over their city by conspicuous displays of images of goddess Durga through Muslim quarters.

In the broadest terms the Hindu–Muslim riots in north Indian cities in the period 1820–50 had a similar context. The growing assertiveness of rising Hindu and Jain commercial groups matched the widespread decline of the Muslim warrior and gentry classes of the old regime and of the established Hindu magnates who had long been associated with them. Jains from Bhewani and Rajasthan, 'Gurwala' banians in the Kanpur region, the Umar petty traders of the east—these were the most volatile and intransigent elements when it came to working out a compromise between the patrons of Hindu, Muslim and Jain festivals.[69] And it was particularly in the regions of the western Gangetic plain where such commercial communities had been until recently constricted within the embrace of powerful Muslim conquest states that the contention was most fierce. Muslim writers were aware of the social tensions which fed into these riots. In the days of the Sayyid brothers during the 1710s and 1720s chroniclers had bewailed the rise of 'grocers' under the patronage of bad Muslim rulers and unscrupulous revenue farmers. The theme was clearer by the early years of the nineteenth century and was taken to its ultimate form by Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly who stated that 'the foreigners had become the masters and the merchants had become the rulers'.[70]

The economic context of communal violence was clear also in the case of artisan communities, though it must be admitted that the evidence here is sketchy in the extreme and the case ambiguous. There has long been an assumption that the tight-knit, guild-like organization of Indian artisans predisposed them to a strong sense of social and religious community, and perhaps to great intransigence in matters of religion. This notion has probably arisen from an analogy with the role of sectarianism among artisan communities in the European context.[71]

There is, in fact, some justification for this view. In the 1729 Delhi riot, for instance, petty Muslim shoe sellers of Punjabi origin were at the forefront of disturbances. Because of the nature of their profession butchers and other small-scale vendors were often involved in violence at festival time. During the early nineteenth century the pressures on weavers and spinners may have worked to increase their volatility. Certainly, dyers and weavers were at the forefront of the crowds in Bareilly in 1816; Muslim weavers of eastern Awadh seem to have been peculiarly receptive to Islamic puritanism, and directed their wrath against their Hindu neighbours from time to time. In 1857 also there were cases in the western districts where the conflicts between 'rebel' armies took on religious overtones as Muslim weavers attacked the houses of petty Hindu traders in force, prominently displaying the Mahomedi flag.[72]

On the other hand, it cannot be argued that artisan culture in itself gave rise to a particularly strong 'communal identity'; indeed it could work in quite the opposite way, encouraging syncretic practices. So, for instance, Hindu and Muslim artisan castes participated together in veneration of the Sayyids of Pirana near Ahmedabad. In the early nineteenth century the Hindu followers of these Sufi teachers were predominantly of the vegetable vendor castes, while the Muslims were silk and cotton weavers. So far had the shared religious culture proceeded that while the Hindus continued to cremate their dead, they carefully cut off the right forefinger of the corpse and buried it within the compound of the shrine.[73] While the piety of many of these artisan communities cannot be in doubt, it seems quite incorrect to attribute to them any generalized 'fanaticism'. Tensions between artisan communities, or between them and merchants or hucksters, reflected quite specific and local economic grievances, though these might express themselves in 'communal' form on occasions.

Conclusions

The first purpose of this chapter has been to draw attention to the incidence of communal conflict in India over the period 1700–1860. This is important because many scholars are only dimly aware that widespread contention of this sort ever took place before the end of Company rule, let alone in the eighteenth century. But this finding also has implications for those authors who recognize that forms of Hindu–Muslim or Hindu–Sikh conflict did take place in the pre-colonial or early colonial period, but hold that their nature and frequency decisively changed after 1860 whether as the result of colonial policy, religious revivalism

or the extension of new types of representative government. What is striking in the examples cited here is that they bear a very close resemblance to the riots of the later colonial period. Like them, they often occurred when local structures of police and urban government were in the process of change. Again, religious conflict seems to have taken on an overtly communal form when local systems of compromise and bargaining were being rapidly modified by the social mobility of new groups of merchants or artisans, or by the defensive manoeuvres of a declining urban gentry. Nor is there much justification for the view that 'communal conflict' spread into the countryside only in the twentieth century. The 'land wars' of the eighteenth century which saw the rise of agrarian Sikh and Hindu peasantry against Muslim rural gentry were apparently no more or less 'communal' than the riots in eastern UP in the 1920s or eastern Bengal in the 1930s and 1940s.

This chapter has also challenged the widespread view that there was a necessary antithesis between forms of syncretic religious practice and communal violence: that is to say that while Hindus and Muslims lived face to face in villages and towns, conflict could not emerge. It is certainly true that the warrior culture of the eighteenth century encouraged many remarkable examples of syncretic practice. But this did not eliminate the possibility that clashes might occur over the status that different religious traditions held in relation to the control of festivals and holy places. The most savage rioting and destruction could take place between groups which in no way challenged the validity of syncretic practice.

Yet while this chapter does not provide much support for the old nationalist view that pre-colonial and early colonial times (with the deplorable exception of Aurangzeb's reign) were characterized by entirely peaceful relations between the major religious groups, it cannot be taken to endorse the 'two nation' theory either. What seems difficult to show is that there was any unilinear or cumulative growth of communal identity before 1860. Indeed, one may very well doubt whether there was ever an identifiable 'Muslim', 'Hindu' or 'Sikh' identity which could be abstracted from the particular circumstances of individual events or specific societies. The notions of 'identity' or 'consciousness', so widespread in the literature now, whether applied to peasants or ethnic groups, seem most dubious on methodological and philosophical grounds, quite apart from the virtual impossibility of proving empirically that such entities ever existed. In some ways, the *Annales* term 'mentalité' seems much more acceptable, implying as it

does a more variable, ambiguous and fragmented form of consciousness and one that is partly contingent on social and economic circumstances rather than constructive of them. All in all, it seems fair to say that many forms of political and economic change in India in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were accompanied by conflicts over religious symbols when social and economic groups temporarily perceived themselves and others as 'communities'. Certainly, there existed reform and revitalization movements which reflected ideological shifts among learned and committed men in all religious traditions. But these did not necessarily lead to conflict between communities, or even a pervading sense of social separateness.

Many of the incidents which have come to light must be regarded as contingent. They resulted from chance political events or the clashing of festivals. But ultimately, the evidence presented in this chapter tends to re-emphasize the importance of preconditions in social structures for sustained communal violence. Analyses of consciousness seem to lead nowhere if taken out of context. Religious differences were more likely to become communal conflicts when they coincided with shifts in political and economic power. Conflicts between Hindu and Sikh peasantry and Muslim gentry, or between Muslim peasantry and Hindu gentry did not inevitably lead to polarization on communal lines. Preconditions are not the same as causes. But in the context of severe crises such as those attendant on Mughal decline, early colonial rule or the Depression of the 1930s they provided pre-existing lines of social fracture.

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56. Sadatullah Khan, 'Gulistan-i-Rehmat', tr. Elliot and Dowson, *History of India*, viii, p. 311.
57. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 325–7.
58. Aligarh Magistrate to Chief Secretary to Government, 18 October 1820, Bengal Criminal Judicial October 1820, Range 134/44, India Office Library.
59. Sayyid Ahmad Khan, *Tarikh-i Sarkashiy Zillah Bijnaur*, tr. H. Malik and M. Bembo, *Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan's History of the Bijnor Rebellion* (East Lancing, 1972), p. 16.
60. Rizvi, *Wali-Allah*, p. 197.
61. Ibid., p. 201; cf. Khafi Khan on Kashmir disturbances, Elliot and Dowson, *History*, vii, p. 493.
62. A.L. Srivastava, *Shuja-ud-Daulah* (Delhi, 1961), i, pp. 27–31; cf. Gyanbaffee Mosque File, Benares Collectorate Records, Central Records Office, Allahabad.
63. Report of the Allahabad Magistrate, 1 September 1814, Home Miscellaneous Series, 776, India Office Library.
64. Commissioner Moradabad to Government, 20 August 1833, Bengal Criminal Judicial Procs., November 1833, 140/143, India Office Library.
65. Rizvi, *Wali-Allah*, p. 197 (the case of Kanpur Chand), 198 (Ratan Chand), 200 (Jawhari Bazaar).
66. A. Das Gupta, *Indian Merchants and the Decline of Surat, 1700–50* (Wiesbaden, 1979), p. 277.
67. *Calcutta Gazette*, 9 April 1784.
68. S. Mukherjee, *Calcutta, Myth and History* (Calcutta, 1977), p. 101.
69. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, pp. 337–8.
70. Rizvi, *Shah 'Abd al-'Aziz*, p. 534.
71. But see also Pandey, 'The Bigoted Julaha'.
72. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, p. 364.
73. H.G. Briggs, *The Cities of Gujarashtra* (Bombay, 1849), p. 314.

8

The British Military-Fiscal State and Indigenous Resistance: India 1750–1820*

This chapter considers two closely related issues: first, the nature of the East India Company's state as it evolved in India during the eighteenth century and, second, the form, incidence and timing of Indian resistance to that state. The resistance of indigenous and subject peoples to foreign rule has been a fashionable topic for Indian historians in recent years, but resistance cannot be explained outside its historical context, and underlying much of this work are assumptions about the nature of the colonial state in India. These need to be examined before the quality and form of the Indian response to British expansion can be properly understood.

When they come to consider the East India Company's regime, historians adopt two broad positions. These might be called the 'oriental'

*This chapter was originally published in Lawrence Stone (ed.), *An Imperial State at War. Britain from 1689 to 1815* (London, 1994), pp. 322–54. Its aim was to try to tackle the problem of whether the East India Company acted like any other Indian state of the eighteenth century, or whether it was a wholly new form of bourgeois state. It did so by selecting out and balancing 'continuity' manifested in aspects of revenue management and state structure with novelty and 'change' evident in the central ideology of the Company's administration and its links with the international commercial economy. Likewise, the chapter argued that Indian resistance to the Company's power in the period 1757–1820 drew on tested forms of non-cooperation and resistance to earlier imperial and regional hegemonies such as the Mughals and the Marathas. Yet, because the claims of the British understanding of the power of the sovereign were absolute, by comparison with that of earlier rulers, the nature of Indian resistance changed both in quality and quantity. I would now wish to argue that some of the issues around which 'patriotic resistance' revolved in this early period retained meaning and importance for the Indian statesmen and publicists of the mid- and late nineteenth century, especially in places distant from Calcutta, Bombay and Madras. The distance between patriotism and nationalism was rather less than this chapter suggested.

and the 'western' perspective. Keen to avoid the view that British conquest marked an abrupt break between tradition and modernity or between feudalism and capitalism in India, the 'orientals' have implied that up to 1830 or beyond, the East India Company operated essentially as an Indian state writ large.[1] According to them, the British were successful conquerors not so much because they represented the leading edge of a western technological power, but because they were able to build upon the machinery of territorial-revenue extraction and military traditions—the 'fiscal-military state', to use John Brewer's phrase[2]—which the Mughal rulers and their Hindu subjects had long been developing in India. It was quite appropriate that Company servants returning to Great Britain were given the Mughal title 'Nabob', since they had amassed fortunes through partnership with Indian commercial interests, played the politics of factional alliance within Indian courts and camps, and patronized Hindu and Muslim shrines and deities. As Robert Frykenberg puts it, the British Indian Empire was 'Indian' in a very real sense.[3]

A corollary of this position is that Indian resistance to the East India Company can sometimes reasonably be described as anti-British, or even anti-foreign, but it would not be very meaningful to call it 'anti-colonial', since the Company at this time displayed none of the features of a mature colonial regime. The incidence of resistance to, or collaboration with, the white invader was determined not so much by the characteristics of the Company itself as by patterns of indigenous political or economic structure. Resistance was sometimes simply a continuation of the long crisis of succession to the Mughal Empire; alternatively, it was a by-product of state building or class formation, but one also driven by Indian compulsions.[4] This present-day 'oriental' interpretation would, of course, have found support among the Company's eighteenth-century critics, such as Edmund Burke, who believed that it had become an oriental power corrupted by the legacy of 'Muhammadan tyranny' and riven by the venal private interests of the white nabobs.

Most Indian-born scholars and other radical historians reject all or part of this formulation, and might by contrast be called 'westerners'. On this issue they are unlikely bed-fellows with the few recent representatives of the imperial history tradition which regarded empire as a 'good thing'. Many Indian scholars, for instance, tend to assert that the Company state was wholly external to Indian society and that throughout the British period it was little more than an exploitative western army of occupation. Other historians depict a deeper engagement between the

British and indigenous social classes, but insist nevertheless that the Company, far from being Indian, worked in the interest of a foreign capitalist imperialism. For most of them British rule means the draining away of the wealth of India in the form of tribute and major disruption to all levels of Indian life. For a few it means the establishment of peace and the beginning of state-led westernization and modernization. However, in all these interpretations, the Company is regarded as fundamentally different from all regimes that had preceded it.

According to the 'westerners', therefore, Indian resistance, whether it arose from organized states, from peasants, weavers or the tribal people of the forests and hills, is properly described as 'anti-colonial'. It was 'directed against the policy, systems and personnel of the colonial government'.[5] Eighteenth-century anti-British resistance was a lineal precursor of what is now called the 'subaltern' (that is, non-elite) anti-colonialism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Under the fragmented surface of the multifarious outbreaks of the late eighteenth century there was a continuously developing core of protest against imperialism and capitalism (or against beneficent western modernization, if you will). This protest, according to one recent group of historians, reflected a coherent consciousness of opposition to the invading Other which was expressed in ballads, legends and oral histories and through the fashioning of symbols of revolt.[6]

To proceed further with this debate, it becomes necessary to examine again the ideology and interests of the expanding British state at a global level. It is not enough to argue, as some 'orientals' have done, that the Company's rapid rise to territorial dominion over the subcontinent can be explained simply with reference to the age-old tendency of any successful Indian polity to construct a universal, overarching empire in the subcontinent. The Company's regime was evidently something more than a white Mughal Empire. Nor, again, was the degree of disorder unleashed by the decline of the Mughals sufficient explanation for the Company's career of aggrandizement. On the other hand, a problem for those holding the 'western' position has been to find an explanation for the origins of British imperialism in India that relates it convincingly to the form of the domestic British state and economy. How can one reconcile the image we have of the bourgeois British constitutional and commercial state of the eighteenth century with its gaudy and aggressive Indian *alter ego*? The domestic Jekyll-state was supposed to have been weak, uncentralized and non-interventionist by comparison with its European contemporaries. It pursued a policy of 'blue-water'

commercial expansion, not one of conquest and land war. It was believed to have been rather ineffectual in fiscal and military matters, especially during the period when the oriental Hyde-state was conquering nearly one-quarter of the human race, albeit in a fit of 'absence of mind'. Over the last generation some attention has been given to the imperialism of private British trading interests; but it has not really proved possible to explain the main thrust of the Company's policies and conquests by reference to these or to any major change in Britain's trading interests in the east. The central question remains: if, as so many native-born Indian historians imply, the Company really was an extension of an expansive aggressive nation-state skilled in the practice of economic imperialism, why was so little of this apparatus of state power apparent in Britain itself?

One of the many merits of John Brewer's *Sinews of Power* is that it provides an opportunity to reconsider the relationship between the British state and its surrogate, the East India Company. For if, as he says, the British state was more powerful, flexible and effective than has been hitherto believed—if, indeed, it was a highly successful example of 'military-fiscalism'—then the Company Raj in India may not simply have been the luxuriant oriental aberration that is sometimes portrayed.

This chapter argues that, for all its indigenous penumbra, the East India Company's state enshrined at core two important features of the domestic state which, once set working in an Indian context, imbued it with much of its expansionist impetus. These were, first, a rigorous tradition of administrative accountancy and, second, an ideology of transcendent law and sovereignty. These features also provide a key with which to interpret the nature and timing of Indian resistance to the British Empire. The chapter, then, sets out to transcend the distinction between 'oriental' and 'western' interpretations of the Company by analysing the interaction between its Indian and British components. In turn, it attempts to illustrate more precisely the extent to which Indian resistance to the Company differed from the ebb and flow of warfare and insurrection in the late Mughal polity.

The 'Sinews of Power' in the Periphery

John Brewer's targets—the notion that metropolitan Britain was a weak state, that its military and political organization was attenuated and that England was, consequently, a little-governed society—has its parallels in the literature on India. Here the assumption that has guided many

historians is that the Company as much as the British government was generally hostile to 'any military enterprise or expedition'[7] and that in India its agents in their official capacity wished only to trade without hindrance and had no desire for territorial conquest. Only the 'decline of the Mughals' and the rampant private interests of men-on-the-spot pulled the Company into schemes of dominion. However, Brewer's thesis might lead us to question some parts of this argument. From the mid-seventeenth century the East India Company had the capacity, will and legal right to wage war and had an intermittent interest in territorial power and revenue. Its policies were often aggressive; and, in crises at least, it insisted on a rigid interpretation of its own rights and sovereignties in India. Powerful voices could always be heard in London and India arguing for caution; but a flexible structure for military conquest—and a set of arguments to support it—was already in place early in its history, even if the juggernaut was not loosed at full tilt until the mid-eighteenth century.

Events such as the war of the Company Chairman, Sir Josiah Child, with the Indian Emperor Aurangzeb (1688) or the conquest of Bengal (1756–65) have been seen as aberrations from a generally pacific policy or as unintended consequences of events in Indian politics. Yet during the key periods of the growth of the domestic British state (the late seventeenth century, 1740–63 and 1798–1820) a more militant discourse asserted itself in Company circles. Though there were never clearly defined 'war' and 'peace' parties, there were always voices arguing for the use of force if it could be effective. In 1676 Gerald Aungier, Governor of Madras, summarized it by saying that the 'general commerce' had to be driven 'with sword in hand'.[8] Child's basic premise was to imply a logical extension of this. He differed from his contemporaries and successors more about means than about ends. He wrote in 1686:

> You see what a mighty charge we are at to advance the English interest and to make this Company a formidable martial government in India which formerly the Dutch despised as a parcel of mere trading merchants or pedlars . . . [Without territorial revenue] it is impossible to make the English nation's station sure and firm in India upon a sound political basis, and without which we shall always continue in the state of mere merchants subject to be turned out at the pleasure of the Dutch and abused at the discretion of the natives.[9]

Child's desire for unfettered sovereignty over Indian naval and commercial stations and his determination to reduce and if possible eliminate dues paid to Indian rulers were aborted by local confusion and the vigorous military response of the Mughal governors. However, quietly and

without the same rhetorical flourishes, later governors in the main settlements took a similar line when it was prudent to do so. Thomas Pitt was arguing again in 1701 that the Nawab (Mughal viceroy) of the Carnatic (Madras) should be repulsed: 'We are in a good condition to bang him.'[10] The struggle between the 'old' and 'new' East India companies in the 1690s and 1700s also encouraged both bodies and their united successor to adopt an aggressive stance 'in the name of the English nation'.[11]

By the turn of the eighteenth century many of the institutions of domestic British governance had been translated in miniature form to Calcutta, Madras, Bombay and Surat. Armed shipping frequented the stations and bodies of troops guarded the factories. Courts of Admiralty had been set up to deal with interlopers—that is free merchants or rivals who broke the Company's monopoly.[12] In 1688 a municipality was established at Madras with a mayor and twelve aldermen who had police powers and operated outside the authority of local rulers. In 1717 the British in Calcutta secured a charter from the Mughal Emperor which allowed them to trade free of all dues for an annual payment, to rent additional land and settle throughout eastern India, and also, as they took it, to fortify.[13]

Clearly, the Company was already more than just another Indian trading community peacefully integrated into indigenous society during an age of Eurasian partnership; but more important than the intentions of the European actors was the Company's structure in India. It was beginning to resemble a fledgling version of John Brewer's domestic state. As in the case of its metropolitan sire, an important model and spur to aggressive management was the Dutch example. The continued success of the VOC (the Dutch East India Company) in the mid-seventeenth century had been one of the main reasons that the joint-stock organization was retained, despite the relatively poor results of the English Company before 1660.[14] After 1688 the weak financial position of the Treasury allowed the Company to fight off the various interests which were gathering against its privileges by making over its capital to the government. Once the United East India Company of 1708 had been fostered by the ministry,[15] state and Company moved into the same close relationship that had characterized the ties between the States General and the VOC. The British Government received direct payments from the Company and also benefited from the buoyancy of East India stock. In return, the Company received military aid from the Crown in its intensifying struggles with its European and Indian enemies.

K.N. Chaudhuri has demolished the assumption that the Company was a rather loosely controlled commercial organization which suffered continual financial haemorrhages. On the contrary, stock was scientifically controlled and Company accountancy was highly skilled.[16] As in the case of the Dutch Company, though unlike the Iberian powers, the cost of military action was built into the balance-sheet, so that a proper assessment of profit and loss could be arrived at. To adapt the words used by Niels Steensgaard in his study of the Dutch,[17] 'markets were transparent' for the English Company, and it had 'internalised protection costs'. Historians have sometimes been tempted to argue that by 1760 the English Company had become, like the Portuguese and Spanish overseas enterprises, decrepit predatory hulks harbouring hordes of individual parasites. After this date the English Company was indeed forced to borrow money from the Crown; but this was late in its career, and even then, the Company's financial position was quite clear and well accounted, enabling the funding of its debt on the London market.[18]

Next, we must address the issue of sovereignty, law and the state's perception of itself. Brewer attributes the British state's success to its refusal to countenance the persistence or emergence of a military or landholding *imperium in imperio*. It depended neither on overt military force nor on 'quasi-feudal forms of servitude, but on the rule of law'.[19] Consequently, as de Tocqueville argued, the English ruling class 'submitted that it might command'. The Company transplanted some of these ground rules to India. Company servants were amenable to English law in all settlements. The Company tried to insist that their governors should be given ceremonial precedence over senior officers of the Royal Navy.[20] The superiority of civil over military power within India was maintained even after 1757, when the Company began to develop a powerful and well-trained infantry army.

British attitudes to Indian sovereignty were similarly robust from the outset,[21] despite the reverence that was apparently paid to the principles of social hierarchy embodied in Indian kingship. At various times the Company was content to rule in tandem with Indian princes, and even to share the symbols of sovereignty with them. After Plassey even Clive professed himself unwilling to trench on the authority still held by the Mughal governors of Bengal,[22] though at other times he appeared to be urging ministers to assume full sovereignty over Bengal. Hesitations of this sort arose from domestic political fears that were aroused by the prospect of the Crown's capture of the East India Company's patronage. Nevertheless, there was an irreducible substratum of legal and political

thinking in Britain as well as within the Company's Indian establishments that insisted that the Company directly embodied the authority of the Crown in Parliament and was happy to conclude that Indian authority was nugatory or, at best, that it had been wholly and irrevocably granted to the 'English nation' in its Indian stations. Underlying the dealings of Company officials with Indian powers, even the Mughal emperors, was the prejudice that Muslims had no real rights with regard to Christian property and privileges. The presumption in the Laws of England that 'Turkes and other infidels were not only excluded from being witnesses against Christians, but are deemed also to be perpetual enemys [*sic*] and capable of no property'[23] was toned down but never entirely forgotten. Even compared with the Dutch, as Chaudhuri notes, the British were the most likely of European powers to insist on their privileged status in India, to brand Indian powers as aggressors and, above all, to resist paying forced levies to them.[24] For the English Company such exactions must be denied because payment implied not only fiscal dependence but also loss of sovereignty, for the two were closely allied in British political thought.

British insistence on their rights had several aspects. First, government and Company usually tended to take a strong view of their sovereignty within India when dealing with the French, other Europeans and, later, Americans. From the earliest years Portuguese claims to Indian sovereignty were dismissed with an anglicized version of Grotius's doctrine that Asia was not 'terra nullius' to be expropriated by Portuguese armed with a papal grant.[25] By 1787 Eden (who was then negotiating a convention with the French) could speak flatly of British 'souverainté possessoire et exclusive'[26] in eastern India, a status which the Company had generally asserted in dealings with European enemies since the Peace of Paris in 1763. Second, this 'hard' interpretation of British authority had already been adopted in the main Company settlements and in the territories immediately dependent on them. In Bombay from 1668 the Company conceived of itself as an absolute sovereign, ruling as surrogate of the British Crown.[27] It minted its coin not in the name of the Mughal Emperor but of the Crown;[28] it administered justice to Indian and European inhabitants through common courts of judicature. The establishment of a public gallows (which was abhorrent to both Hindus and Muslims) was a visible manifestation of the new supremacy of law. In Madras the Company's rights were theoretically derived from local Hindu princes and later acknowledged by the incoming Mughal conquerors. After 1752, however, the Company's ally Muhammad Ali

(who was supposedly himself a representative of the Mughal Emperor) relinquished the quit rent he had been paid by the English for the settlement, and thus effectively abolished 'the last fragment of dependence upon an Indian prince at Madras'.[29]

In Calcutta and north India the Company still formally acted in the name of the Mughal Emperor until the 1840s (the final tatters of Mughal overlordship being abolished after the Rebellion of 1857). Yet Company officials showed a strong tendency to invade and modify Mughal sovereignty. At the same time the British contrived to apply the rights devolved on them by the Mughal emperors with relentless rigour as far as they applied to petty kings and princes. In its dealings with the larger post-Mughal states the Company insisted on jurisdiction over its own subjects and over their dependants, thus turning the concept of 'extra-territoriality' into a powerful engine of subversion.[30]

Since 1694 the Company had been zamindar (landlord) in Calcutta, and its receivers of the revenues had exercised rights of life and death over Indian residents. However, the turning point for the Company's construction of its authority in India was the grant of the decree by the Emperor Farrukhsiyar (1717) allowing it leave to trade freely within the whole of Bengal and its dependencies and giving it certain exemptions from taxation.[31] In Indian theory and practice this was simply the grant of a right or honour. It did not imply a perpetual sharing of imperial authority, nor did it necessarily rank the Company's officials above imperial officials or other royal officials within the provinces thereafter and forever. The practice of Mughal diplomacy or honour giving was fluid; it did not seek to establish 'constitutional principles'. Nevertheless, from this time onwards, Company officials interpreted the grant as conferring on them an all-encompassing devolved sovereignty: 'In all future disputes with the local governors, the point was repeatedly made that the company traded in India by right and not by any favour of the imperial officers.'[32]

In the light of the 1717 document, for instance, hostilities with the Bengal ruler in 1756–7 were justified on the ground that he was no more than an 'official' of the Mughal, intruding on the rights of a body (the Company) to which the Mughal Emperor had devolved authority in parallel.[33] From the perspective of the Bengal ruler (Siraj-ud Daulah), however, the Company's arming of its settlements and its brusque refusal to give him the customary presents upon his accession were open acts of rebellion against an overlord, for the Nawab was trying to reassert his dynasty's hold over the European companies and Indian

commercial and landholding interests which had become far too powerful in his realm.[34] Moreover, he was insisting on his dynasty's legitimacy as the foremost sharer in Mughal authority in eastern India. Peter Marshall has convincingly argued that the Company never planned the 'revolution' which brought it to power in Bengal in 1757. As a judgement on the intentions and policies of the individual actors this is probably true. On the other hand, the Company's long-held desire to acquire a local fiscal base and its tendency to regard the Bengal rulers as mere officials rather than kings suggest that this 'revolution' was an outcome of basic organization and assumptions of its Indian establishments, as much as of the contingent struggles of Indian and European actors.[35]

The resolute nature of much of the Company's discourse about sovereignty and dominion was not only apparent in grand events such as the conquest of Bengal. It also informed the tenor of its relations with Indian princes and landowners from the point when Clive took on the revenue management of Bengal in 1765. The dominant official version was that there were no rights in India other than those derived from the Mughal Emperor. His sovereignty was indivisible but could be devolved. As Mark Wilks, along with Burke, one of the dissenters from this view, observed, the British would dispossess proprietors under certain circumstances because 'they thought that the actual property of the soil is vested in government, who alone have the power of making an absolute sale of the land'.[36] This seems to have been based on misleading notions of oriental despotism which were common among European observers, but the British may also have had in mind early English land-law, where right was derived from the Conquest settlement. So the Company, which had inherited Mughal sovereignty and rights of conquest by virtue of the 1717 grant, and had later acquired the powers of Mughal governor and revenue manager, could dispose of all land rights *de novo*. The British came to attribute great importance to the events which appeared to confirm this Indian 'constitution'. The 1717 document was repeatedly invoked. The grant of the revenue management of Bengal to the Company (1765) was similarly privileged. It became a founding document comparable to the Magna Carta. Indeed, in Benjamin West's famous painting of the grant of the Diwani to Clive (*c.* 1795) it was portrayed with appropriate grandeur.[37]

As I have suggested, the British interpretation ran contrary to Indian ideas of sovereignty and royal rights which suggested a corporate view of kingship and a symbiotic view of rights over men and land. Indian rulers, including the Mughals, garnered loyalty and support by giving

honour through boons conferred in great assemblies (the darbars).[38] Such grants of office and honour could be redefined and rearranged according to changes in political circumstances. In the same way, titles to land as they had evolved in the later Mughal period represented a delicately balanced pyramid of rights to the usufruct of land and labour mediated by notions of social interdependence. There was no absolute dominion in the manner of Roman or English law, and the rights of landholders, zamindars, did not extinguish other inferior rights of occupancy and common use.[39] The right to collect land revenue on the part of the state was quite independent of the zamindari right, so that the fiscal hierarchy could stand independently of the hierarchy of land rights.[40] The persistent revolts that the British encountered in the period of conquest were, in part, a consequence of their refusal to accept that Indians did not, in general, conceive rights in terms of simple proprietary dominion.

Among the British there was but little difference of emphasis between the men of the Enlightenment, such as Warren Hastings, and their more aggressive anglicizing successors, the generation of Cornwallis and Wellesley. Hastings' fundamental position, albeit modified and qualified at times was: 'The sword which gave us the dominion of Bengal must be the instrument of its preservation; and if . . . it shall ever cease to be ours, the next proprietor will derive his rights and possession from the same natural charter.'[41] The velvet glove concealing this mailed fist was Mughal sovereignty, interpreted in an exclusive manner. Hastings' actions were entirely consistent with this doctrine. In 1775 the revenues of the territory of Benares collected by Raja Cheyt Singh had been transferred to the Company by his suzerain, the Nawab of Awadh (the Grand Vazir of the Mughals). The Governor-General chose to treat the Benares ruler as a mere landholder. He referred to him as the 'zemindar of Benares' and drew attention to his lowly origins as a revenue collector for the Nawab's father.[42] Hastings arrogated to the Company the right to increase the Benares revenue and dispossess the Raja at will. The attempt to seize and imprison the Raja badly misfired and put Hastings himself, and the British position in the mid-Ganges valley, in peril. Somewhat earlier, the Council in Madras, influenced by the avaricious creditors of the Nawab of Arcot, had conspired with him to occupy the rich, adjoining kingdom of Tanjore. The majority of the British in Madras enthusiastically supported the Nawab's claim on the ground that the Tanjore Raja was a 'mere landholder' who indirectly owed his position to Mughal grant,[43] though Mughal sovereignty was

but a distant shimmer in this far southern land. Here again agricultural operations were brought to a temporary halt by the resistance of local farmers. Later the Court of Directors found it necessary to restore the Raja, but the dynasty's authority was already fatally undermined.

More than one European foreigner noted how absolute the Company's claims became in any crisis. A.H. Anquetil Duperron, a famous French orientalist and translator of Indian holy texts, was hot in his denunciation of the British. He dilated on 'their mercantile depredations . . . the spectacle of the overthrow of empires, of princes expelled from their estates, massacres, kings in irons; of fugitive peoples, of rich lands devastated'.[44] His particular target, however, was the monolithic interpretation of its sovereignty advanced by the Company, and theoretically justified by Robert Orme (the Company's historian) and others. If the Raja of Tanjore (whose territory had been usurped in 1773) was considered a mere revenue collector entitled to no share of sovereignty, 'by reasoning in this manner, one might say that the Grand Dukes of Muscovy were not sovereign and independent princes until Europe recognized them as emperors'.[45] Perhaps, again, as the British insisted, Maharaja Cheyt Singh of Benares was the son of a revenue collector, 'but in India the rajas, the nawabs, dependent on the Mughal are but the collectors of revenue for that monarch'.[46]

Anquetil Duperron implied that the British in particular had little time for shared sovereignties or hierarchies of royal rights. It is true that other European nations—notably the Dutch and the French themselves—were as violent in their commercial policies as the English Company had been. Yet in theory and practice they appear to have left more space for indigenous sovereignty and rights during the period of the *ancient régime*. The Dutch, for instance, imposed heavy agrarian demands on their territories in north Java; but they left much of the structure of Javanese royal authority (the indigenous kings of *regenten*) undisturbed.[47] The Dutch Governor-General was deemed to be the grandfather of the local princes and even acquired a symbolic pedigree linking him to the Goddess of the Southern Ocean, patron of the Javanese. It was not until the later Napoleonic regime of Marshall Herman Daendels and the despotism of Sir Stamford Raffles on the island (1811–16) that the religious and magical power of the indigenous kings was humbled and their ritual palace centres desecrated.

We shall see that this powerful concept of paramount sovereignty was redoubled in force during the military empire building of the Wellesley era. The insistence on 'public tranquility' embodied in the

Company's Regulations was to be manifested in the widespread use of the gallows and summary executions of minor princes and military leaders characterized as 'plunderers'. Devolved Mughal authority was used with exemplary vigour, and the Emperor himself was immobilized, becoming a static source of authority, rather than an active political agent.[48] Yet the question remains: from where did the British derive these muscular notions of law and sovereignty? One thing is clear: they were not particularly oriental. Indian rulers were, of course, arbitrary and brutal at times, but their justice remained personal, discretionary and specialized. Rebellion and recusancy with regard to the payment of revenues were part of the style of Indian political bargaining and were not generally met with extirpation or forfeiture of a family's underlying proprietary rights. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that aspects of metropolitan political culture were important here. No challenge to the Crown in Parliament or to its surrogate, the Company, could be tolerated. Sovereignty could not be shared and royal rights such as those of the future 'native states' or landed proprietors could only subsist *after* the paramountcy (as it came to be called later) of the Crown in Parliament and the supremacy of the law had been established. The hierarchy of authority was to be clear and unilinear. When, for instance, the Nawab of Arcot, who was a subordinate ally of the Company, tried to make direct contact with the British Crown in 1773, he was brusquely rebuffed by the Company. However, to the British more than other Europeans, the clearest guarantee of 'public tranquility' and political subordination was the easy collection of taxes and excise. In India the district collector (the persistence of this title to 1947 is significant), operating an almost unlimited despotism in matters of taxation, was the local embodiment of the state. In practice, Cornwallis's separation of judicial and revenue power did little to impede the exercise of this despotism. At best, the British authorities wished the Indian nobility to 'acquire power by submission', as de Tocqueville might have observed. The office of district collector, in fact, reflected the merging together of two domestic traditions: the traditions of the permanent resident magistrate or Justice of the Peace ruling as a moral exemplar and the powerful excise officer, highlighted by John Brewer.

In the last quarter of the eighteenth century, therefore, the East India Company's personnel already widely subscribed to an absolute notion of the rights of their state and of the 'rule of law'. This gave legitimacy to a flexible military and fiscal organization which displayed a remarkable capacity for territorial expansion. A new infantry army based on peasant recruits had been raised after Clive's victory at Plassey (1757)

This army was supported by a more rigorously and regularly levied revenue, which a specialist body of collectors of revenue and customs attempted to administer uniformly, reducing a whole range of Mughal taxes, tributes and exemptions to more unified rates.

Much of this is reminiscent of John Brewer's picture of the British state as it had emerged a century before. However, there were three important differences. First, the East India Company embodied not only the 'British model', but also what might be called the 'Prussian model' of military-fiscalism: that is to say, through the system of subsidiary alliances, the Company also taxed the lands of its protected allies.[49] After 1763 the Company forced defeated enemies or cowed allies to support garrisons of its own troops on their territories. The pressures of these demands for military subsidy drove Indian states to resistance, but, ironically, also drew the Company into further territorial expansion and, ultimately, into spiralling indebtedness. Second, unlike the domestic state, the Company's Indian state remained highly venal until the end of the eighteenth century. Company officials, private traders and Indian financiers farmed Company revenues and lent it cash. The private interests of these groups and their desire for more revenue and access to new areas of trade also helped to propel the Company on its rise to power. Finally, as the next section will show, the financial networks that supported the Company also drew it into the world of Indian commerce and embroiled it in the internal conflicts of Indian society.

So, was the English East India Company an oriental state writ large or the surrogate of western capitalist imperialism? At core, notions of transcendent law and the sophistication and rigour of its accountancy and its professional specialism certainly mark out the Company Raj as a version of the British state (as duly reassessed by Brewer); but this core was hedged around with institutions and ideologies of a different stamp. The Company operated systems of venality and predatory military taxation reminiscent of some of Great Britain's continental rivals. In the vast periphery of the Company's military and fiscal operations, its personnel did, indeed, assume the form of the Indian state, attracting the type of conflict and resistance that other Indian states encountered.

Resistance to the State's Fiscal Onslaught in Eighteenth-century India

Indians resisted the growing power of the East India Company's tax gatherers, its pretensions to regulate Indian kingship and also its commercial policies. In turn, this resistance limited and shaped the Company's 'state'. There were important respects in which the demands put

on indigenous polities and populations were of a different order to their previous experience of political tribulation: to this extent we can talk about the origins of 'anti-colonial' or 'anti-British' resistance in the late eighteenth century. However, the Company was in other respects adapting the personnel, methods and strategies of indigenous polities during its rise to power. So there are ways in which this 'anti-colonial' resistance was a continuation of indigenous practices of opposition, evasion and bargaining with superior power and the disruptive forces of the 'world outside'.

What, then, was the nature of indigenous social and political conflicts into which the Company thrust itself after 1750? Three types of conflict stand out. First, there were the clashes resulting from the decline of the central authority of the Mughal Empire;[50] second, the consequences of the formation of states in the periphery; and, finally, the heavy pressures resulting from the demand for cash revenue and the attempt by rulers and commercial elites to control trade and production. All these pressures and the resistance provoked were independent of and prior to the rise of the East India Company; but all of them were quickly and inextricably enmeshed with the workings of the colonial state in its peripheries.

The so-called 'decline of the Mughal Empire' had seen a large part of the Indo-Muslim elite which had served the emperors move their base of operations from Delhi into the richer provinces. Here aspiring dynasts tried to establish regional kingdoms. Most of these state builders continued to acknowledge the authority of the Emperor in Delhi, but they also established a closer hold on local resources and gradually diverted the profits of the land revenue and trade into their own hands and those of their supporters. In the former imperial provinces of Bengal, Hyderabad and Awadh, the post-Mughal elites of soldiers and farmers of revenue repeatedly found themselves in conflict with the local (usually Hindu) landholders and warrior chieftains. Such notables (called zamindars throughout much of the north) often held general lordship rights over villages and their produce. Some of them also held more specific rights over markets, rivers, ponds and tanks within the villages, and were social leaders in their localities.

In many parts of India these rural notables and the communities they commanded put up stiff resistance to the incoming dynasts, who appeared to be intent on taking a closer hold on regional resources than Mughal governors had done before them. The most prolonged conflicts were generally in marginal areas where settled agriculture merged with

the lands of nomadic 'tribal' people who kept cattle, the domains of forest dwellers or areas of distinct culture and religion which the Mughals had kept on only a light rein. In the great northern state of Awadh, for instance, the new regional rulers at Lucknow waged long wars in the 1720s and 1730s against the Rajput Hindu chieftains and their clan levies. The founder of the regime (Burhan-ul Mulk), given the choice between collecting the revenue according to the 'coward's rent roll' and the 'real man's rent roll', engaged in countless marches and counter-marches against his over-mighty subjects, some of which are recounted in the family histories of the Rajputs.[51] As the British intervened in the politics of Awadh, their forces also became engaged with the Rajputs; the rebellions their revenue collectors faced in southern Awadh in 1781,[52] and again in the Rebellion of 1857[53] were a continuation of the troubles of the Awadh regime.

Another example of the continuity of resistances can be found in Hyderabad. This large, sparsely populated tract of central Indian plateau was in the process of being transformed from a Mughal frontier province into a kingdom by the family of a central Asian military leader who had once fought for the Mughal emperors. The Hyderabad rulers fought innumerable campaigns against the Telugu-speaking chieftains who controlled the land, allying first with one, then with another of these petty chieftains.[54] Villagers resisted the imposition of new demands by flight; the warrior leaders withdrew into the hills or jungles, emerging only to harass the settled and destroy the deep-wells and irrigation systems from which the would-be dynasts of Hyderabad drew their resources. The resistance of local communities to the demands of the 'Turks' (Muslims) and other, local, enemies was lauded in numerous ballads recounting the forays and raids and valour of their chieftains. In some parts of the region, for instance, the warrior-god Khandoba appears to have been merged in the popular mind with the exploits of local rulers who protected them against the depredations of the Bhil tribal rajas. After 1802 when the British presence in Hyderabad was guaranteed by binding treaties, successive Residents used British troops to strengthen the Hyderabad state in its continued attempts to crush these rebellions in the periphery.

One of the most successful creations of all the eighteenth-century empire builders was the Mysore state constructed by Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan. The British saw Tipu as their most fearsome enemy and his destruction at the fall of Seringapatam in 1799 was to be

celebrated in numerous pictures and books which attested to the new commercial demand for representations of the glories of colonial warfare. Mysore was itself a centralizing state.[55] It sought to conquer the Hindu Nayar communities on the west coast and the pepper trade they controlled. Mysore also thrust westward into the forested 'tribal' zone of the Coorgis, whose loose raj-like political structure and inaccessible terrain formed a dangerous frontier for the sultanate. Haidar and Tipu both fought regular campaigns against the Coorgis, meeting their fierce resistance with the sack of population centres and the burning or clearing of forests in which the Coorgis took refuge. Several hundred thousand Coorgis, including members of their royal families, were seized and resettled in Mysore, while Muslim Sayyid soldier-colonists were settled in Coorg in their place.[56] The wars of the tribal people against Haidar and Tipu were glorified in their oral traditions and ballads. The burial spots of famous leaders who fell in the wars became reservoirs of sacred power and the 'coming of the Sultans' marked an abrupt caesura in the historical memory of the Coorgis[57] which was not effaced by later conflicts and accommodations with the British.

These wars of succession and conquest in eighteenth-century India were not simply, or even mainly, political struggles. The wars between rival successor states to the Mughals and the determination of the new power centres to exact revenue from the peoples under their control or to gain control of artisan production were themselves consequences of the fragility of the economic resources on which these rulers based themselves. The cost of warfare was rising in a society which had long been used to transactions in cash.[58] However, cash revenues were volatile when trade routes were abruptly redirected by political conflict and peasant farmers migrated to areas whose magnates offered them lower rates of rent and revenue. Empire building was influenced by economic considerations long before the East India Company appeared on the scene, and India's economy was already linked by bullion imports to the wider world economy in which Europeans were now playing a growing part.

However, Indian states—even Tipu's Mysore—were not generally monolithic or hard-edged enough to forge either the tactical unity or the consciousness of opposition which might sustain such resistances over a long period or create persistent bonds between them. Andre Wink has argued that all pre-colonial states in India were created and sustained by revolt (*fitna* or *fitvat*), they were shifting alliances of competing

factions rather than structured administrative organizations.[59] For instance, the armed resistance of the western Indian Marathas to the Mughal Empire began as a social movement and incorporated elements of peasant rebellion; but the Maratha movement remained highly ambivalent, and its leaders aimed to associate themselves with aspects of Mughal legitimacy and siphon off imperial resources. Even in the 1740s and 1750s when Maratha power was at its height their aim was not, in any simple sense, to create a Maratha empire or to destroy the Mughal outsider, so much as to 'protect the domain of the Emperors of Delhi' against enemies from Afghanistan and central Asia.[60] Resistance could never become a unified form of social action or construct a coherent ideology when the nature of the state was so friable, sovereignty so extensively divisible and the market so labile.

War and resistance was therefore a tactic to secure a new symbiosis between ruler and ruled, between merchant and artisan. Figures of power from among the 'oppressors' became figures of power in the pantheon of the oppressed. Tactical alliances shifted and the local leaders, who had previously resisted fiercely, sought legitimation and incorporation from their erstwhile enemies. The method both of conquest and of resistance was the raid. Raiding and counter-raiding of villages took place until one or other of the parties was forced to an accommodation by the onset of the monsoon. The regional state would come to terms with a local magnate who would take a 'farm' of the revenue or tribute from the village population, and the contending armies would then march off for a season or two. Constant petty clashes ensued between the revenue farmer and villagers. Village leaders were in a strong position in the eighteenth century as they could control seed, credit and cattle and could often decamp with their whole following since labour was generally in short supply.

For the lieutenants of the regional states, the best method of dissipating resistance was not to extirpate but to try to recentre trade and agricultural production around fortified grain markets which they themselves controlled. Such strong-points might develop into small towns. Nomads and migrant peasants might settle around them and become incorporated into the 'greater society' through Brahminical temples or the missionary activities of Islamic sufi teachers. However, these were changes which occurred only in the very long term. At times during the ebb and flow of state building and resistance the local political power of the villagers, herders or tribals would reassert itself.

The Indian state was never sure of a quick victory until it was cross-bred with the British fiscal-military state.

The Emergence of Resistance to British Dominion

Before 1765 the East India Company operated mainly as a powerful player in this great game of the end of the Mughal Empire. In its commercial capacity it was concerned to purchase cloth at the lowest possible price. It encountered resistance, therefore, from regional rulers, notably in Bengal and the south, and also from merchants and weavers seeking to impede European monopoly power. At this period, the Company's onslaughts were often made through proxies and the reactions to them were inchoate. During the first four decades of the century Mughal governors were more important. Historians such as Khafi Khan and Ali Muhammad Khan denounced the pestiferousness of the '*farangs*' (Franks).[61] Other chroniclers identified Europeans not so much as a political threat but as peoples remarkable for their easy resort to violence and their filthy personal habits. For the Muslim chroniclers, it was the 'Brahmins' (Marathas) who were the enemy (also, of course, potential ally), at once wily and plebeian. For the Marathas, the Muslims or 'Turks' were enemies of the 'Brahmin state', but also potential founts of legitimacy; the British were scarcely noted until they had seized power at Surat in 1759. Consequently, Indian powers hired European military advisers, becoming dependent on European military technology and trade with little thought for the future.

In south India the British did much of their early fighting through the agency of the Muslim Nawab of Arcot, whom they had supported against a French-backed rival in the 1750s. The Nawab certainly encountered fierce resistance in his attempts to create a Mughal-type successor state in the south; a jibe that was thrown at him was that he was a creature of the British. One regional commander, Khan Sahib, a Hindu convert who drew on levies from among the military tribal people of the dry, inland territories (people of Maravar and Kallar 'tribe'), denounced the Nawab as unclean and a bad Muslim[62] for his consorting with the British. Khan Sahib was hanged in 1764, and later passed into the ranks of the warrior-martyrs who populated the local sacred landscape; but it was as an embodiment of charismatic spiritual power, rather than as a victim of the British Empire, that he was lauded in the 'Ballad of Khan Sahib'.

We have seen that in their dealings with Siraj-ud-Daulah, ruler of Bengal, the British were ultimately to insist that they embodied the absolute sovereignty of the Mughal, but Siraj's own 'resistance' appears to have been unplanned. He was concerned to regain control over

dangerous factions in his realm, of which the English East India Company was only one. He tried to keep the doors of negotiation open until the last possible moment, and it is not clear that he was planning an exclusive alliance with the French, as Clive feared. The myth of the implacable tyrant of the Black Hole was given currency by the Company's personnel (notably the Governor, J.Z. Holwell) to justify their own enormous financial gains from the 'Bengal revolution'.[63] Siraj's successor, Mir Kasim (1760–4), was, perhaps, more clearly aware of the ineluctable nature of the Company's advance. He tried to build a new, more compact state in west Bengal and to exclude from it private merchants and the private trade of the Company's officials. It was Mir Kasim's acts of defiance in the face of the inroads of such trade that led to the second Anglo-Bengal war and the beginning of direct British territorial empire there in 1765.[64]

Up to 1765, then, the Company's dealings with the Indian states seemed on the surface very much like those of any other state. It preserved some features of the Mughal diplomatic system and often worked through Indian surrogates. Equally, Indian 'resistance' was unformed; rulers tried to entangle the Company's officials in their networks of power and honorific exchange rather than to expel or destroy them. However, it becomes more difficult to argue that the Company was simply 'another' Indian state with regard to the period after 1765. Between 1765 and 1793 the land-revenue settlement of British India was imposed, putting new burdens on landlord and peasant. At the same time the pressure of the subsidiary alliance system on the Company's allies precipitated a series of crises in the periphery of Empire, modifying the form of Indian resistance. Finally, after 1793, the political language of the Company servants and of the British government began to take on an even more absolutist tone.

The Pressures for Revenue and 'Constructive Imperialism'

After 1765 Indian resistance to the British became more general and more self-conscious as the Company's state itself changed form. It is true that British officials remained dependent on their Indian subordinates and often lacked the power, will and information to break with the existing methods of taxation. There was, nevertheless, a drift towards greater rigour. Historians are much divided on the question of how much the British revenue in Bengal after 1772 was in excess of that exacted by the last Nawab. When inflation and the disastrous loss of population during the great famine of 1769–70 is taken into account the answer is that the increase was probably significant but not massive.[65] Yet British

methods of collection were stricter, embodying a notion of precise accountancy and meeting targets which was alien to the Indian system.[66] The Company had a growing and well-disciplined army of peasant soldiers to enforce its will, even in the fringes. While Mughal rulers had given significant amounts of aid to landlords and peasant farmers in cases where the seasons had been bad or where crops had been affected by war, the Company's Boards of Revenue discouraged officers from granting such aid. They also tried to reduce the enormous 'seepage' of resources back into the localities under the guise of costs of collection. This had been a regular feature of Mughal revenue administration, and it may have accounted for more than one-third of the sums apparently collected.[67] For reasons of financial security, the British also tried to weld together proprietors' rights (zamindari) and the right to collect revenue on the part of government and take a percentage (*malguzari*). Failure to pay revenue therefore led to the forced sale of underlying proprietary rights for debt. The result was that large-scale auction sales of zamindari land took place, especially after Lord Cornwallis's Permanent Settlement of the Bengal land revenues in 1793. This settlement was made at a much higher level than many landholders could bear, at least initially.

It was less the financial squeeze itself than the political implications of an offensive against the rights of landholders and peasant leaders, signalled by the new revenue settlements, that explains the intensity of simultaneous peasant risings in Bengal in the late 1770s and the 1780s. Peasant leaders (*mandals*) in Birbhum, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts fought a fierce land war against Company revenue agents between 1779 and 1781.[68] Large-scale resistance from tribal groups, which had hitherto avoided regular revenue payments, broke out during the same period on the fringes of Bengal and Bihar. These communities were variously identified by the British as Santals, Chuars, Pykes and Ghatwals. The ancestors of these people had fought Mughal governors in earlier days, but not at the same time, and they were not threatened with a comparable loss of autonomy.

It was not only peasant leaders, weavers and chieftains on the fringes of the old Bengal province who felt the pressure of the Company's intervention. In the late 1770s and early 1780s the external mechanism of accumulation represented in the subsidiary alliance system also went into higher gear. This was the period when the Company's Residents at Lucknow (notably Nathaniel Middleton) exerted themselves to try to squeeze resources from the Nawab of Awadh, who was already paying

a large percentage of his total revenue takings to the Company in rigidly fixed installments. The Nawab of Arcot and the Nizam of Hyderabad in the south were also under pressure to cede valuable territories to the Company in lieu of 'balances' supposedly incurred under the terms of their own alliances. Private peculation also flourished. For instance, Sir Thomas Rumbold, one of the most famous of the 'Nabobs', was busy extracting presents from the landholders of the northern Circars (provinces) of the Madras Presidency, adding substantially to his private fortune. Such fortunes were regularly remitted to Britain through Canton and the Portuguese territory of Macao.[69]

The critical and novel feature of the Company's fiscal organization was its internal integration and its direct links to commercial power outside India. Administrative accountancy was now directly determined by patterns of European international trade and intercontinental warfare. Viewed from the Accountant General's office in Calcutta, commercial operations, military subsidies and revenue operations were all one. The Company had to pay its troops and also purchase the annual investment in Indian cloth for the home market.[70] Profitable sales alone would allow the Company to pay the annual dividend fixed by Parliament and so keep the prying eyes of ministers out of its increasingly embarrassed affairs.[71] The complex of official Company activities fronted a machine of private venality, with which it was deeply entangled.

The resistance of Indian rulers, landholders, weavers[72] and peasants became more intense in equal measure to the Company's demands. As European and American warfare was followed by renewed conflict in India, the attempts of Warren Hastings to protect and enhance his sources of revenue and tribute became more aggressive. The passive resistance of Tanjore farmers against the agents of the Nawab of Arcot and the Company (1776)[73] was followed by the revolt of the Raja of Benares and many of the landholders of southern Awadh.[74] In 1781 and 1782, at the height of the American War, the Indian Empire also seemed to be slipping to the edge of destruction. The Company was fighting the Marathas, Hyder and Tipu; it faced revolts in its northern territories and the loyalty of its great central Indian ally, the Nizam of Hyderabad, was dubious. The alliances between these rulers were tenuous, riven by old enmities and differences of interest at the local level. However, it was more than flaws in Hastings' diplomacy or the machinations of Company servants on the spot that had brought about this concatenation of dissidence. The logic of the revenue and subsidiary alliance systems with their rigid internal accounting, lack of responsiveness to local agrarian

circumstances and complex links to the international economy, was causing deep stresses within the Indian polity. The British military-fiscal state which had emerged a hundred years earlier was now firmly entrenched in the subcontinent.

In the short run, the Company's seemingly limitless expansion was held in check by the triumph of the Pittite Whigs and the pressure for 'economical reform'. Cornwallis, who was sent to India in 1787 by the Younger Pitt and his Indian expert Henry Dundas, made strenuous efforts to eliminate internal venality through his Permanent Settlement of the Bengal revenues (1793) and the creation of a salaried and disciplined cadre of district officers. Cornwallis's external adventures were restricted to a pre-emptive war against Mysore, but elsewhere, and especially in Awadh, he tried to curb the Company's tributary demands and the activities of private traders, both of which had intensified Indian resistance and the turbulence of the British-Indian frontier. However, circumstances had not modified the ingrained contempt for what Cornwallis himself regarded as the depraved principles of 'Asiatick government', and the financial requirements of the indebted Company were only temporarily satisfied. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were to set the fiscal juggernaut moving again, but this time its forward roll was justified by reference to a heightened sense of national mission and a new emphasis on the legitimacy of British authority in India.

Constructive Imperialism and the End of the Indian Polity: 1798–1818

Lord Cornwallis's lieutenants sought to infuse a new dignity into the Indian Empire. Precedents of Roman civic virtue were emphasized and the painter Robert Home depicted the Governor-General receiving the hostage sons of Tipu Sultan of Mysore in an act of classical 'benevolence'.[75] It was Richard Wellesley, Lord Mornington, who imparted an uncompromisingly regal status to the office of Governor-General. He viewed Indian rulers in the same light as the 'territorial aristocracy' of Great Britain and Ireland and himself as a direct representative of the king and as embodiment (rather than agent) of Mughal sovereignty.[76] To further his battles with the 'Cheesemongers of Leadenhall Street' (the Directors of the East India Company), Wellesley created his own private office and a series of family circles of proteges in the military, civil and political services which were entirely dependent on him. He introduced new ceremonial and etiquette to the Governor-General's round and built a Palladian mansion with which to emphasize his new status

A variety of themes justifying British power in India were voiced by Wellesley and his circle. The danger to the 'British nation' from French imperialism, both republican and Catholic, was invoked to justify a forward policy. The argument of the 'French threat' was used to some effect: it was employed to discipline recalcitrant newspaper editors in Calcutta and silence the free press. Now Parliament was also susceptible to appeals to the French danger and loathe to question the forward march of British arms. Pitt and Dundas themselves were complacent about additional conquests, the one viewing them as useful bargaining counters at any later peace negotiations, the other glimpsing a long-term commercial advantage.[77] Advocates of the new consensus for imperial expansion in India stressed the virtues of loyalty to the Crown and of British racial separateness. Eurasians and Portuguese-Indian Catholics were regarded with suspicion; young British officials were to be trained in a new Fort William College, removed from hazards of continual contact with the 'depravity' of the people of India.

Sir Arthur Wellesley, the Governor-General's brother, could be heard arguing that British conquests were justified by the Laws of War and conquest which went back to the times of the 'Ancients'. British India became a society infused with military values. Of course, there had always been conquistadores and freebooters at large, notably during Clive's conquest of Bengal, but such men had been fleet-footed commercial entrepreneurs as well, suspicious of authority and used to insisting on the rights of 'freeborn Englishmen' to justify their private interests. By 1800 the markers between merchants and patrician military class were now more firmly drawn, a change reflected in the abolition of the old titles of Merchant, Factor and Writer. As the military strength of the Company's armies swelled from about 90,000 to nearly 2,30,000 during the period 1793–1820, military officers occupied a larger percentage of posts as Resident to Indian courts.[78] In some ways the British imperial elite became more like the French; but there remained an important difference. Even Arthur Wellesley remarked on the importance of civilian supremacy. It was true that 'outside Bengal' the Company's authority had a 'predominantly military character', but it was a civilian despotism which the Company wished to create.[79] The rigorous use of military power against Indian rebels was always carried out in defence of the civil power and the supremacy of law.

At the same time Company officials appealed, with apparent inconsistency, to Mughal supremacy and the 'ancient Hindoo constitution' when enforcing political settlements to their own advantage. Mughal sovereignty had long been construed as a once-and-for-all grant to the British:

it was no longer negotiable, fluid and constructive. Now the Company refused to accept bilateral relations between nawabs and other rulers who acknowledged this supremacy. They also restricted the Mughal ruler's access to Calcutta and intervened in matters of succession in Delhi.[80] The old practices of bargaining and of tempting one's enemies to alliance within the complicated hierarchies of Indian kingship were now to be regarded as 'treason' and grounds for deposition. This was the case with Umdat-ul Umara, Nawab of Arcot, who was accused of treasonable correspondence with Tipu Sultan.

The harder edge of British empire building after 1798 was in part a reflection of commercial and financial pressures. The Company's debt soared upwards even as Wellesley tried to stabilize it, drawing more states into lucrative subsidiary alliances. The Indian and European wars also encouraged both the Company and private entrepreneurs to attempt to gain direct control of supplies of tropical produce and manufactures. The wars in the south, for instance, were in part struggles over control of the pepper trade; but these were also conflicts about power and authority. The experience of international war with French republicanism, alongside the changing temper of Indian resistance, laid bare the absolutist concept of sovereignty that had always been implicit in British thinking and institutions.

Wellesley's assumption that Indian, like English, notions of sovereignty were absolute, and that lesser rulers were not sharers in sovereignty, but a kind of territorial aristocracy, was put to the test in the case of the Marathas, still regarded as a dangerous constellation of powers in western India. The Governor-General tempted the Peshwa Baji Rao II into a subsidiary alliance at Bassein in 1802. The Peshwa was indeed a sovereign, but he was not the only one, and certainly not the embodiment of Maratha kingship (the Raja of Satara, descendant of the Marathas' founding leader, Shivaji, approximated much more closely to this position). The Peshwa was, instead, a descendant of the hereditary 'mayor of the Palace' of the leading Maratha royal family whose own dynasty had taken on a kingly status. Nevertheless, Wellesley regarded the Peshwa as 'head of the Maratha Confederacy', expecting him to draw the other chiefs into alliance, since he thought that they 'held places like that of himself and his fellow hereditary peers in the British Constitution'.[81] Rather than this stabilizing the politics of western India, profound misunderstandings of their status as sharers in sovereignty pushed the other Maratha rulers into a fatal war of resistance to the Company (1802–4).

Tipu Sultan, however, represented the clearest example of an Indian ruler who had forged new political and military weapons with which to fight off the Company's threat. Sir Thomas Munro remarked that Tipu's state was 'the most perfect despotism in the world'; the fact that 'almost every employment of trust or consequence being conferred on men raised from obscurity, gives to the government a vigour unexampled in India'.[82] It is true that Tipu had dispensed with the service of his flaccid Mughal-style army and nobility and had tried to build up a new fighting force based on mercenary soldiers who owed him devoted loyalty.[83] Tipu had also tried to galvanize his revenue-collecting machinery, eliminating intermediary magnates in an effort to deal directly with the peasantry who controlled the villages. Yet Tipu was ultimately unsuccessful in building a despotism on the shifting sands of the Indian corporate state. Even his status as an Islamic zealot, much advertised by the British and his Muslim enemies, is somewhat overdrawn. He was careful, for instance, to show respect to and patronize the religious places of Hindus and Christians who were not his enemies. While he denounced the 'swine-eating infidel' to the Ottoman Sultan in an attempt to build a Muslim alliance,[84] he became a Citoyen of France and sought a marriage compact with one of the Hindu Rajput kings of Gujarat.

What made the British fear Tipu was not so much his 'perfect despotism' or his Muslim zealotry, but the fact that he was fighting, like the Company, with the weapons of trade, monopoly and boycott. He also refused to be drawn into the gossamer network of subsidiary alliances and military dependency that had eroded the complex polities of his Indian peers. Rightly judging his enemy's insistence on its superordinate sovereignty or its status as proxy of Mughal sovereignty to be a deadly threat, he declared himself emperor in his own right (*padishah*) and tacitly repudiated Mughal overlordship.[85] The resistance of Tipu was thus precisely calculated. It had the object of countering the two critical and novel features that we have attributed to the Company: the fiscal engine of the 'subsidiary alliance' and British claims to absolute sovereignty, whether in the name of Tamberlane's Mughal descendants or that of the Crown of King Edward.

Debellare Superbos . . .

The opposition of Mysore and the Marathas reached a crushing end when their main forces were defeated in battle between 1799 and 1818. The effort of conquest was costly. It greatly increased the East India

debt and embarrassingly conjured up the hostile scrutiny of Parliament. As critical for the British, though less fully covered in the literature, was the suppression of local kingdoms and sovereignties. Some of these had never been firmly subjugated by the post-Mughal states because they lay on the fringes of the arable, in jungle or hill-land. Others represented complex parcels of shared sovereignty where rulers could count on the support of extended king groups or armies of rural 'citizen levies'. Whatever their status, Wellesley was determined to assert the Company's (at times, the Mughal's) status as transcendent sovereign: 'A more active and vigorous control is necessary, as well over the corruptions of our own servants . . . as over the refractory spirit of their native princes and landowners.'[86] Here at last, the mailed fist of the modern western state had worn through the velvet glove of oriental bargaining and sovereignty sharing.

Two important episodes of resistance illustrate these themes: the 'rebellion' of Kattaboma Naik in Tirunelvelli District of Madras (1798–9) and of the Palassi (Pychee) Raja in Wynad on the west coast (1793–1806). Kattaboma was typical of the Poligar rulers of the dry southern tip of eastern India. Descendants of former Telugu settlers in this Tamil-speaking area, these local chieftains claimed a 'share' in the former sovereignty of the Vijayanagara overlords of south India who had flourished in the fifteenth century.[87] Their assumption of the trappings of kingship, however, was relatively recent, expressed through the patronage of the south's great temples and numerous local festivals; but to the official mind of the Madras Presidency, suffused with the new intransigence exemplified by Wellesley, Poligars such as Kattaboma were no more than 'auxiliary chieftains'. In an elaborate historical fiction, which strengthened previous Mughal claims, the chieftains were said to have 'rented villages' and derived 'police powers' from the Nawab of Arcot. The British considered themselves to rank above the Nawab, since they themselves had secured recognition of his authority from the Mughal Emperor in 1763. Consequently, the British deemed themselves overlords of these small kingdoms. This fiction legitimated the military campaign against Kattaboma mounted by Stephen Lushington, Collector of the Poligar *peshcush* (that is, tribute). Kattaboma's lands were not particularly fertile, the trade he controlled a mere trickle. Though the Dutch allies of the French had put out some feelers to the southern chieftains, the strategic importance of the area was minimal. It is difficult to avoid the impression that Lushington and his military aids forced a confrontation with the Poligar in order to challenge his

authority. When a British officer was killed in a mêlée, they had all the cause they needed to uproot his authority utterly in the interests of the newly invigorated imperial principle.

Kattaboma's fort-palace was stormed after a long siege and several thousands of his supporters were put to the sword.[88] Kattaboma and his younger brother, who was credited with supernatural powers by the local population, were publicly hanged. The public execution of a ruler, even a petty ruler, was new to Indian judicial practice. It announced the supremacy of English law and criminal justice. Soon after, the Arcot state was abruptly swept away, following the discovery of 'treasonable' letters in Tipu's palace and the refusal of a junior member of its royal house to accept the terms for accession to the throne which the British offered. British authority was now displayed as absolute and unchallengeable. Lushington was to write, with Livian sonority:

> By the energy and justice of Government, the rebellions have been subdued; the oppressed have been upheld and exalted; the obedient have been liberally rewarded; and the extinction of divided authority [between the British and the Nawab] has restored the fairest province of the Carnatic from an acknowledged state of anarchy to a state of subordination and prosperity.[89]

The social context of the second revolt considered here, that of the Palassi Raja, was more complex. The eighteenth-century wars of trade on the Malabar coast had increased tension between different communities. Coorg tribals had fought on the British side because of their treatment at the hands of Mysore. Nayar Hindus on the coast had hit back at Muslim Mappila (Moplah) merchants, who had been favoured by the Muslim Mysore rulers when British supremacy was established after 1792. The British, for their part, tended to favour the Nayars, eliminating many of the subordinate land tenures on which the Muslims subsisted; but they also recognized that the Mappilas were 'a useful merchant community', for at this time British policy on the west coast was powerfully influenced by the interests of Bombay pepper traders.[90] Company policy towards the rajas and indigenous rights in general was often contradictory and riven with doubt. But faced with clashes between what they took to be 'two irreconcilable races of people', and the ever-present likelihood of war with nearby Mysore, their military and political response became firmer. The Company's Public Regulations, a virtual Code Napoléon for some officers, treated local kings as hereditary landowners. The Regulations effectively stripped them of their judicial authority, especially in matters of capital punishment, at

the very time when demands for revenue were enhanced. Revolts broke out all over Malabar as kings and the powerful matrilocal lineage groups (*tharavads*) rallied against the outsiders.

This combination of concerns, fiscal and royal, lay behind the resistance of Kerala Varma, the Palassi Raja of Kottayam, and his ultimate destruction by the British. The Company had passed over Kerala Varma's claim as 'renter' of a certain territory for that of his more malleable uncle, the Kurumbranad Raja. Tension with the Company rapidly escalated when the Palassi Raja tried to demolish a mosque belonging to the Mappila Muslims 'according to custom' which attached to his royal power.[91] Later, the Company infuriated the Raja by publicly flogging his servants 'in front of his face'.[92] The ultimate cause of war was the Raja's particularly cruel execution (by impalement) of some Mappila bandits who had pillaged the house of a Hindu Chetti. This merchant was a member of a community with which the Raja was close, and which acted as intermediary in the pepper trade. The Company ordered the seizure of the Raja on a charge of murder and declared implacable hostility to him and his supporters, publicly advertising the statement that: 'Not a sepoy shall rest in this province, until you and your adherents are utterly extirpated.'[93]

The pepper war and the patronage of the merchant intermediaries, the Nayars and Mappilas, was obviously an important issue here. More central was the clash of authority. The Raja, even though he was no longer 'renter', still saw himself as a residual sharer in the ancient sovereignty of the Keralan King Pirumal Cherumal. As such, he was entitled to adjudge on the height and nature of religious buildings and to hand out the cruel punishments reserved to great kings. His servants were ambassadors to the British, not menials to be flogged at will. The Company, in contrast, saw itself as representative of the Mughal and also as surrogate of the British Crown by right of conquest. The Keralan kings were simply 'chieftains' or 'landlords'; they must submit unconditionally to the rule of law, and they and their servants were amenable to due process in public courts.

There followed a long civil war during which the Raja and his followers escaped to the hill region of Wynad and levied a remarkably successful guerrilla war against the Company for eight years. Kerala Varma supported himself on contraband pepper sales while, in the hallowed local tradition, he destroyed the Company's own crop with fire. This was a popular revolt, though one still mediated by ideas of corporate kingship. A large part of the rural population appears to have supported him, entertaining for him 'a regard and respect bordering on

veneration'.[94] Proclamations ordering people to impede the foreigner were issued on behalf of the ancient deities of Wynad; but this local patriotism was considerably strengthened by the firm adherence to the Raja's cause of two groups. Hill-men and tribal peoples such as the Kurumba and Kurichiyar formed the heart of resistance to the probing British scout columns. These people saw a novel threat from the outside to their ancient status as lords of the forest; not unnaturally, they were labouring under the impression that 'it was the intention of our Government to extirpate the whole race'.[95] The strong cultural bond, which exists over much of India, between Hindu king and tribal people was reconstituted in this alliance of resistance. A second key group in Kerala Varma's long resistance were the Chetti merchants who supported him with arms and money long after it was in their economic interest to do so. Undoubtedly, the Raja had been their loyal patron during the long pepper wars with Mysore and the British; but here again strong traditional links of ritual and service also bound the Chettis to the royal house. Resistance mirrored the Keralan ideal of the martial king and his dependants. Even when in 1806 the British marksmen closed in on Kerala Varma, the Raja shouted to the closing rifleman that he should not come any closer to him because this would pollute his royal body.[96]

Outcomes

Many of the petty rulers who resisted British expansion in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries passed quickly into popular culture as semi-divine warrior heroes. Kattaboma's execution place attracted veneration, and the trees around it were still festooned with offerings when the *Tinnevelly Gazetteer* was being written in 1909. The Palassi Raja was assimilated into Malayali folk-ballads, already well populated by Robin Hood-like figures who sustained the poor. Even the Muslim Khan Sahib, who had been chastiser of the warrior people of the south, passed into their pantheon as a figure of divine force. Parts of his dismembered body became objects of cultic worship for their respective tribal subdivisions.[97] All this happened a century or more before the appearance of articulate anti-British nationalism in south India. These leaders had died in warfare which in timing and in cause, if not in method, might properly be seen by historians as anti-colonial. Yet one has to be careful in building these and similar figures into a coherent, or evolving, tradition of anti-colonial resistance. The most important aspect of their heroic status remained the fact that they had died a martyr's death against great odds. No doubt the foreign intrusion was resented, but it was of a lesser order of importance to the participants

that they were 'anti-British' or 'anti-colonial'. When the Kampani Sahibs and Angrezi Sarkar (Company, 'white masters' and 'English government') are mentioned, little seems to be made of the fact, except when stories have been reworked under the influence of later nationalist traditions. Figures who died in battle with Indian powers, or even notorious 'social bandits', attract equal respect, even veneration. In Rajasthan the death monument (*samadhi*) of the horse of the heroic Raja of Mewar who fought against the Mughals was honoured in this way.

The great figures of anti-British resistance have also been the object of popular veneration, but, here again, it has proved difficult to assimilate them wholeheartedly into a nationalist pedigree. Tipu Sultan was revered as a martyr very soon after his death. Various outbreaks of millenarian revolt were associated with his name, and Muslim preachers invoked his spirit at the time of an outbreak of mutiny at the military station of Vellore in 1806.[98] The myth of Tipu the 'Muslim fanatic' sedulously cultivated by the British had also taken root so that up to the present day there has been an argument between those who see him as a 'secular' (that is confessionally dispassionate) ruler and the Hindu right which sees him as a Muslim 'communalist'. Even amongst Muslims, Tipu is a controversial figure, being claimed by some as a kind of early Islamic fundamentalist, by others as a broad-church 'secularist'.

One reason why a clear tradition of resistance did not emerge from the colonial wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was that the policy of the Company itself was ambivalent. Its officials were quite ruthless in the imposition of the 'rule of law', the assertion of British paramountcy and the sanctity of regular payments of revenue. Yet once these imperatives had been acted on successfully, ideology and practical reason conspired to hold them back from further intervention. The British needed magnate intermediaries to collect the revenue and keep the peace, especially now that the Company's finances were irredeemably in debt. Again, their own political culture, and what they believed they saw in India, predisposed them to leave in place a neutered form of Indian kingship once Company paramountcy was firmly established. Out of this ambivalence the British fashioned their policy towards princely states and rural magnates. Any of the magnate comperes of the Palassi Raja or Kattaboma who would co-operate and were financially strong enough to stand the pace were in due course reinvested with many of their privileges and local powers.[99] Lushington and his like, no less than Wellesley, wanted India to possess a dignified territorial aristocracy rather than a volatile hierarchy of kingship. As in de

Tocqueville's formulation quoted by John Brewer, the Anglo-Indian as much as the English aristocracy must 'submit in order to rule'. The official mind of British India came to favour the disarmed descendants of the rajas and village magnates who had offered the strongest resistance to the Company in the eighteenth century. When for a brief period between 1830 and 1857 a more interventionist and anti-magnate policy was pursued, the result, officials claimed later, was the Rebellion of 1857.[100]

Indian resistance was in part 'anti-colonial' rather than a continuation of the eighteenth-century Indian wars of succession in that it was directed against a state that was, at core, an accountant's and lawyer's state. On the other hand, it is difficult to detect a tradition of insurrectionary consciousness, let alone a pattern of social organization, connecting the magnate and peasant resisters of the late eighteenth century with the agitations of townsmen and middling peasants which inaugurated the nationalist era after 1880. Resistance was not a thing in itself, standing outside history and society; it closely reflected the form and social interventions of the colonial state. Indian aristocracy and village leaders fought British impositions in the late eighteenth century because they were novel, harsh and intrusive. Yet many later came to terms with the British military-fiscal state in the east because that state's aims were limited. The emerging alliance of lord and peasant against the Company during the years 1780–1820 was fragmented and dissipated in the next generation. For the Company sought a 'rule of law', paramount sovereignty and regular revenue. Its pretensions to civilize, to centralize or to construct a cultural order were quite weak by comparison with its French or Iberian predecessors and contemporaries, or even its Mughal predecessors. In this respect, too, the British Indian state mirrored its metropolitan model. While Great Britain may have supported a strong fiscal-military state, that state had little desire to mould and fashion the bodies and minds of its subjects, or to make windows into their souls.

Notes and References

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9

Returning the British to South Asian History: The Limits of Colonial Hegemony*

This chapter argues for a reappraisal of the role of the British factor in modern south Asian history. This might seem a reactionary theme. In India, as in all former colonies, not least Australia with its 'push from the bush', scholars have trumpeted their desire to create a post-colonial history, to recover subordinated voices and take account of diverse cultures. Yet the chapter is not urging a collective return to exclusive studies of the high politics of colonial viceroys and Congress leaders, though much excellent work has been done here, especially for the 1930s and 1940s, and much remains to be done. I am concerned instead that Indian studies should try to assimilate and put to greater use the very significant new perspectives which have emerged over the last twenty years in British studies. That area is broadly defined to include the history of the British in Ireland and the Dominions and other colonies in

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This article was published in *South Asia*, 17, 2 (1994), pp. 1-25. I include it here because I wish to demonstrate again that the thrust of this book is not to argue for an enclaved indigenous history of Indian regional patriotisms. At every point after the end of the eighteenth century, the interventions of the colonial state created profound ruptures and transformations both in society and economy and in people's reflections on them. What is intended is to provide a deeper lineage for Indian nationalisms, and bring their study back into a comparative Eurasian frame. Indian history should neither be enclaved as a thing unto itself, as the 1970s preoccupation with the 'South Asian Mind' seemed to suggest, nor should it be seen as wholly dominated by the derivative clone of the European state and its bourgeois ideology.

addition to domestic British historiography. The topics at issue are diverse. They range from reappraisals of the roots of British political thought, through studies of the domestic state, military and police apparatuses to the debates about 'gentlemanly capitalism' and the British economy. The enterprise need not take the form of a parochial narrowing of vision. Interestingly, several of the relevant authors are expatriate Britons living in North America and Europe, or Americans. But by enriching our understanding of British historiography we can refine our view of colonial knowledge and practice in India, and the indigenous engagements with them. We may also be able to understand the limits of the colonial intervention. Thus 'returning the British to South Asian history' is not incompatible with restoring historical agency to south Asians in the making of their own history, which has rightly been a preoccupation of many recent writers.

It may be objected that such a tilt is not needed. Some authors are already drawing on recent studies of British history to illuminate their understanding of the colonial state.[1] But the auguries are mixed. The 1970s and 1980s saw a general retreat from nuanced studies of the imperial factor. The Cambridge historians argued, in contradictory vein, that the colonial state was weak, a 'straw man' struggling with its nationalist *alter ego*. Yet, at the same time, the state's interventions were formative of that very nationalism. Eric Stokes retreated from the *English Utilitarians and India* to conclude that official policy was rarely effectual, simply 'one clerk talking to another'. Some recent historians have argued that continuities in the workings of the peasant family farm or merchant house count more than the disruptive impact of early colonial capitalism. Or, if they insist on the heavy impact of that capitalism, it was broad and not specifically British force. The subaltern historians drew on Gramsci to posit hegemonic colonial structures, but concentrated largely on the people without power. Thus too often, the actual texture, ideologies, intentions and institutions of the British in India were denatured to the point of caricature. To the 'Cambridge School' the state was often no more than a vast act of patronage in the fruits of office. For the 'Subalterns', a colonial presence which was established very early and was formative of much of modern Indian life, became little more than an army of occupation of inexplicable longevity. Its only arena of interaction with Indian society seemed to be in the realms of physical repression and economic exploitation. For American ethnohistorians, 'British culture', a homogeneous, timeless essence, was introduced as a convenient *deus ex machina* at the denouement of

infinitely more nuanced studies of Indian society. Ronald Inden, perhaps mischievously, perpetrated the ultimate horror by incorporating the British into the 'Anglo-French' imperialist formation,[2] and according Hegel a greater role in this entity than James Mill.

Yet there is a paradox. This vanishing, denatured, homogenized British Other remains the principal causal explanation for most of the major turning points in modern Indian historiography, especially ones which are deemed deplorable by liberal and left opinion. The claim that colonialism decisively damaged a buoyant, varied, world-class pre-colonial economy is of ancient origin; so is the claim that the British constructed religious communalism.[3] But in recent studies, the British also appear to have created caste from the infinitely flexible and accommodative social order of pre-colonial times.[4] They wrenched the languages of Hindi and Urdu out of a plethora of overlapping linguistic styles and welded them to religious community.[5] They created criminality out of the discourses of decentred tribal communities.[6] They privileged men over property-owning women.[7] They imposed the hegemony of western medicine on socially attuned, culturally sensitive indigenous practitioners, and dishonoured the smallpox goddess, Shitala.[8] And it was not even necessary to have British officials present, for British texts and the English language have been credited with almighty influence by 'post-colonial literary criticism'.[9] Macaulay, in his most visionary vein, might have been startled by the extraordinary capacity of Britain to remould Indian society, according to this literature. So while the picture of the British Lion has gradually faded, leaving only its snarling teeth in view, its odour still pervades everything. How might recent writings in British historiography help us to resolve the contradictions of this all-powerful yet vanishing British presence?

The Imperialism of British Public Doctrine

Since 1980 there has been a gradual reassertion in British historical writing of the importance of religion, and particularly the religion of the established churches in England, Scotland and Ireland. The discussion begins with ideology because I do not wish to reduce British policy and influence in India to the simple imperatives of material exploitation. All the same, the dominant ideologies of colonialism were at least dialogically related to changing forms of material exploitation and political control, as should become clear later. Now the generation of historians of the 1960s and 1970s believed in a Whig progression from the radical religious beliefs of the seventeenth century, through Locke and Hume's

rationalism to secular liberalism in the nineteenth century, and socialism in the twentieth century. That emphasis was reflected in the relative weight given by Stokes in his analysis of the intellectual roots of pre-Mutiny British policy to Benthamism and utilitarianism, as compared with evangelical Christianity. T.R. Metcalf has followed this emphasis in his cogent new work *Ideologies of the Raj* in the *New Cambridge History of India*. He remarked to the author that, by comparison with the Americans, the British were not a religious people, and so the role of religion can safely be downplayed in their colonial experience.

Yet this consensus has been demolished in British historiography. Historians of the right such as J.C.D. Clark[10] and Maurice Cowling[11] have emphasized the commanding importance of religion, and especially of Anglican doctrine, in British politics and social thought to the twentieth century. Their insistence that the salience of liberal secularism can be exaggerated has slowly persuaded historians of a decidedly different political outlook. For instance, Boyd Hilton has shown how important the evangelical concept of a judgemental Providence was in the formation of early-nineteenth-century economic thought.[12] At the other end of the century, far from succumbing to secularism, church attendance and religious activism actually increased between 1870 and 1914.[13] As Andrew Porter has argued, the nineteenth-century imperial state was mirrored by and informed by a British Protestant, and it should be added, an Irish Catholic, spiritual empire. This religious commitment moulded, limited and directed, even if it did not determine the ideology of most officials and other expatriates.[14] Missionary activity also provided a set of parallel bureaucracies and an arena of public debate in which the assumptions of the secular Empire could be both reinforced and challenged.[15]

This tilt towards religion can help us to recapture important aspects of nineteenth-century colonial Indian experience as it was lived both by the British and by indigenous people. In the eighteenth century, many officials had been deists. Their rationalistic pantheism informed their search for an ancient constitution of the Indian Empire exemplified by Abul Fazl's irenic interpretation of the Mughal Emperor Akbar's kingship.[16] It also influenced the understanding of the orient of William Jones, Charles Wilkins and H.T. Colebrooke in ways that have not been sufficiently recognized by recent critics of orientalism. India could never be seen as wholly 'other' while men still searched in it for clues to the religious sensibility and fundamental knowledge which God had planted in all men.[17] During the early nineteenth century, the evangelical

wave encouraged a more derogatory view of Hinduism and Islam, as is well known. What needs to be stressed again is the great significance of religious opinions and practice for the generation of the 1830s and 1840s. The cast of mind was typified by Charles Trevelyan, and by the powerful official connection that developed around James Thomason, Lieutenant-Governor of the North-Western Provinces.[18] This school was later spread to the Punjab by officials such Robert Montgomery and R.N. Cust.

Despite an official distance from the missionaries, Anglo-India from 1828 to 1857 could be characterized as a covert confessional state. The motto of the avowedly modernizing government of the North-Western Provinces was: 'We want books with a Christian spirit, not Christian books.'[19] Underlying the movement for the diffusion of useful knowledge to Indians by means of tracts was the idea that social discipline would ultimately promote spiritual growth. Here Indian developments directly reflected efforts by the British Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge[20] to instil social discipline into the domestic working class. 'Public instruction', another catchphrase of the 1830s in both Britain and India, was intended to create the context for a quiet Christian revolution.[21] This covert official commitment to spiritual change in India was paralleled by a massive effort of missionary propaganda directed from Britain. The Serampore Baptists had already proclaimed their intention to create a civilized public sphere of debate in India through the diffusion of vernacular newspapers. Now, other Christian denominations, notably the Church Missionary Society, invaded north India and flooded the country with books and pamphlets. Some of these vigorously denounced Hinduism and Islam.[22] Others more subtly built Christian knowledge into tracts on history, geography and astronomy which were circulated by semi-official schoolbook societies to the first generation of government schools. Even the humble *panchang*, or almanac, which all Hindus and many Muslims kept beside them to tell the time, was enlisted in the evangelical ranks. Bengal and north India were bombarded in the 1850s with the *Kristo Panchang*,[23] or a printed Christian almanac, which was sold for a few annas. Some of the earliest Bengali and Hindi printed history books for schools contain accounts of the Jewish people and the Christian Church.[24] Geography books insisted on the role of the church in the British constitution. Lancelot Wilkinson, Assistant Resident in the state of Bhopal, sought to spread western science by adapting traditional pandit education to the propagation of Copernicus and Newton.[25] But his 'experiment' at Sehore in Bhopal

state in grafting the old onto the new knowledge was informed by a covert Christian message. Similarly, James Ballantyne at the Benares Sanskrit College sought to bring his pandit charges through all the stages of Western intellectual enlightenment by translating Aristotle, Aquinas, Bacon and the moderns into Sanskrit.[26] In the civilizing mission, God took a back seat. This had been the case in domestic British science and education since the Newtonian revolution. But He was present, nevertheless, and Indians were more perceptive than we give them credit for in seeing this. They reacted to the appearance of Christian churches and villages. They did not credit the distinction between public and private belief which allowed James Thomason to declare himself officially neutral in religion, while at the same time he translated the prayer book into Hindustani for Indian Christian converts.[27] Moreover, to many Indians, Christianity was not even 'just another religion', it was the lowest religion, the faith and lifestyle (*din*) of miscegenated Portuguese and their lewd women.[28]

Recent historians have downplayed the importance of the perceived religious conflict in the social changes that preceded and culminated in the Indian Rebellion of 1857. Some revision is needed here. Of course, conversions to Christianity were relatively few except where large indigenous Christian communities already existed. But the impact of the intense missionary propaganda, the dominance by European and Indian Christians of the new print media, and the simultaneous appearance of government schoolmasters in town and country, were profoundly unsettling for the established Indian order. H.S. Reid, Inspector General of Schools in the North-Western Provinces in the 1840s and 1850s travelled through hundreds of villages where whites had never been seen. He was persistently addressed as 'padre', though he had no direct religious affiliation.[29] The perceived collusion between missionaries and government provoked a widespread response not only from Hindu and Muslim religious teachers but also from subordinate Indian public officials. Muslim clerics organized petitions and protests against missionary activity, especially in the aftermath of the famines of 1833 and 1838 when missionary organizations took orphaned Muslim children into the Secundera Orphans Institution.[30] Benares pandits began to distribute printed denunciations of Ballantyne's investigations of the Shastras, which they feared were designed to elicit points favourable to Christianity. The impetus for the founding of the first self-consciously Hindi newspaper in the Devanagari script was the collection of Sanskrit materials by Ballantyne and other Christian educationists.[31] An

organization which sought to protect the sacred river from the steamship was set up and maintained close contacts with the neo-orthodox in Calcutta.[32] The controversy over widow burning was, as Lata Mani states,[33] a controversy over the status of Indian tradition which was now invested with a textural authority comparable to the Bible. However, the most significant change of all was the impetus this debate gave to the development of the indigenous press and publishing.[34]

By the 1840s organizations such as the Sacred Ash Society in Madras and the Dharma Sabha in Bengal[35] had begun to project a novel version of a public, all-India Hinduism under attack from western interference. Yet this in itself was innovation. Whereas, in the past, dharma (piety) had always been qualified by a region or type—for instance, Raj Dharma, or Maharashtra Dharma—the Dharma Sabha became a generalized public arena for a Hindu nation, opposed both to the unreformed Brahminical hierarchy and the foreign *mlecchas*. This can be seen clearly in the debate about ending government patronage of Hindu institutions. The Christian moral majority among officials and missionaries wished to end government support for temples and Muslim foundations. In the districts, collectors withdrew from arbitration between opposing religious sects during times when processional routes clashed. They wished to distance themselves from paganism and sacred conflict and so privileged 'the custom of the neighbourhood'.[36] Both these developments were momentous. The commercial men and landholders who had created the Dharma Sabhas and their equivalents stepped into the vacuum as a new 'Hindoo public', bypassing the priestly and temple authorities.[37] Similarly, the withdrawal of government to a supposedly neutral position in local ceremonial disputes gave added status to faction leaders in towns whose social position now depended on a forward, even confrontational, role in what were increasingly seen as 'religious riots'.

As recent historians have argued following Habermas,[38] one of the critical changes to come about in colonial rule in India was the restructuring of the public sphere. The independent editor and the publicist were to become vital orchestrators of the national movement. But this new public sphere was in important respects a creation of the imperialism of British public doctrine. Later reform movements, such as the Arya Samaj, derived their force from their ability to appropriate and invert Christian doctrines[39] and to use the Christian media of 'useful' small books and aggressive proselytizing against them.

However, as argued earlier, a proper re-evaluation of the British element in modern Indian history might help us to appreciate the limits of colonial hegemony and to understand more precisely the locus of Indian agency and energy in the colonial context. For while the Baptists, the CMS and the crypto-Christian administrators unwittingly helped to engender an Indian critical public, its rapid development owed much to patterns in debate, publicity and the diffusion of knowledge which were already in place in India. I call this area of debate and social and political critique the Indian ecumene.[40] This was the community of learned administrators, jurists, Mughal public officials and community leaders who represented the views of the populace to the rulers during the late Mughal period and the rule of the successor states of the eighteenth century. The Indian state had been sensitive to the political and social discourses of its more honourable citizens. Bodies of intelligentsia and literate administrators kept up a constant dialogue through the Persian news report, the private letter, the couplet of a satirical poem and the Persian or Hindustani written tract.[41] The place for debate was the steps of the mosque, the space outside the city temple, the kazi's house or the shrine of the local saint. Debate was regulated and formalized. Literary issues preoccupied the Indo-Muslim ecumene or proto-public, as they did Habermas's eighteenth-century European public. In the poetic *musha-ira* the emperor's or nawab's presence was honoured, but his poem might be subject to scathing criticism. Information circulated rapidly, and well beyond the ruling elite. Theological disputations and covert political debates sometimes involved large parts of the urban population in Hogarthian scuffles.[42] Placarding against unjust officials was as common as the *pasquinade* of baroque Rome.

The way in which the north Indian critical ecumene helped determine the nature of the nationalist public of the late nineteenth century needs to be considered in detail. But one aspect of continuity might be alluded to. With the exception of the schoolbooks of the Department of Public Instruction and technical lawbooks, the major genres of pre-print written manuscripts passed, in similar proportions, into the world of printed books and pamphlets after 1840.[43] The main forms were: the almanac, the Vaishnavite sectarian poem, Tulsi Das's *Ramcharitmanas*, and the medical pharmacopoeia. Even the new indigenous newspaper at first drew heavily on these genres and on the old Persian news reports. The imperial doctrinal factor, therefore, revitalized and restructured existing patterns of public debate and knowledge rather than creating them

anew. Print capitalism energized existing communities of written communication rather than, as in Benedict Anderson's formulation,[44] created a radically new consciousness.

British Public Doctrine, the Rebellion of 1857 and After

Interpretations of the Rebellion of 1857 have been secularized along with interpretations of British rule.[45] Yet, while it is clear that economic and political grievances explain the force of the revolts in the hinterland, their representation by Indians (and in some cases by the British)[46] ascribed an important role to religion as a set of cultural symbols and energizing beliefs. It was specifically Christians, not simply Europeans, who were massacred in the outbreaks. In so far as it is possible to recover the political discourse of the rebels, a constellation of ideas developed around the notion of surreptitious conversion seems to have been very significant for them. Government schools were seen as forcing houses of Christian conversion and moral laxity while school textbooks were regarded as surrogates for the Bible. Western medicine and science were viewed as specifically Christian, and indeed false knowledges.[47] It is, of course, true that many of the British desired to see the outbreak as a 'Muhammadan conspiracy' or an outburst of fanaticism. But this is no reason for dismissing the manifest importance of religion and culture in rebel ideology. The real problem is that historians have sought to see 1857 as a 'progressive' force and this has seemed difficult to square with the religious themes with which it is permeated. However, if post-modernism has taught us anything, it is that modernity and religion are not incompatible. To emphasize doctrinal themes in the revolt is not necessarily to consign the rebels of 1857 to the 'reactionary' category.

This imperial doctrinal factor did not die out after 1860. Instead it continued to combine in interesting ways with Indian political and religious debates. British policies for school and university education continued to reflect Victorian religious mores. The missionary attempt to introduce the Bible into classes in government schools may have failed. But the actual content of the curriculum remained soaked in crypto-Christian ideas. Despite official tremors, Protestant and Catholic mission schools continued to shape the mind of the new Indian elites in ways that we have not begun to understand. The moralizing and self-help doctrines which were common in the ICS in the days after the 'competitionwallah', and the influence of Benjamin Jowett, were even

more influential in St Stephen's College, Delhi or St Xavier's College, Bombay. The miserliness of an imperial government in the grip of classical economics was important. Yet it was reinforced in the personal beliefs of many members of the later imperial elite, British and Indian, by a deep suspicion of state intervention and by a conviction of the need for the moral rearmament of self and community, as Clive Dewey has argued.[48] The debate between Partha Chatterjee, who insists that Gandhi was part of the post-Enlightenment rational episteme and Ashis Nandy, who sees him as an essential Indian figure, surely misses the point.[49] It was Christian moralizing which informed Gandhi's encounter with the West, not the West's rational episteme. In fact, that secular post-Enlightenment rationality has been greatly exaggerated in recent writings on the British Empire.

After 1900, the doctrinal influence continued even into the days when scholars have concentrated on the salience for empire of science, Keynesian economics and socialism. As Gerald Studdert-Kennedy has recently emphasized,[50] Christian rearmamant was an important element in the make-up of the diehard supporters of imperial power in the 1920s and 1930s. It was as significant in that mentality as was Catholic imperialism in the eyes of the French generals, politicians and settlers who wished to perpetuate France's Empire in southeast Asia after the Second World War. Equally, Christianity was a covert influence in nationalist circles. Directly, it inspired many nationalist leaders, especially in south India. Indirectly, it helped transform the Hindu ideal of *sewa*, or service, into an energizing public doctrine.

We tend to forget the role of Christians in Indian nationalism because Christians bulk so small in independent India. It is worth being reminded here of the importance of the Rudra family of Indian Christians. Sushil Rudra was the first Indian principal of St Stephen's College, Delhi. It was he who sent his Vice-Principal, C.F. Andrews, to bring Gandhi from South Africa. Many of his relations were committed moderate nationalists. His son, Major-General Ajit or 'Jick' Rudra, won the Victoria Cross against the Afghans. On the Burma Front, he persuaded a battalion influenced by Indian National Army propaganda to stay on the Allied side. But later, he persuaded Bullabhai Patel to represent the Indian National Army officers at the Red Fort trial.[51] This is a parable of late colonialism. Loyalism was not simply a matter of social class or bribery by the state: it was also a powerful if restricted ideological force generated out of liberalism and, sometimes, covert Christian influence.

Loyalism in the later days of the Raj needs to be taken as seriously as Irish, or for that matter Australian loyalism. Thus far it has only embarrassed Indian historians.

Military-fiscal Imperialism

The French were mentioned earlier. The British Empire has often been compared with the French. The Catholic and Gallic *mission civilisatrice* has been emphasized in the French case. The British Empire, it is said, was a non-confessional, pragmatic, free-trade empire, with a rather limited ideology and a restricted view of state power. This brings the argument to the second point where modern trends in British historiography may be able to energize Indian history. The stereotype of the weak British state, mirrored by a weak British nationalism, has come under sustained assault from British and Irish historians. The most elegant and persuasive case has been mounted by John Brewer[52] who argues that between 1688 and 1815 Britain was a powerful military-fiscal state. It was able to sustain and survive one hundred and fifty years of war with more populous and initially more wealthy neighbours because of its flexible and ruthless system of taxation, its relative lack of official venality and its rigorous suppression of magnates who in de Tocqueville's phrase 'must submit in order that they might command'. In Brewer's account, powerful justices of the peace and almighty excise officials represented the mailed fist within the velvet glove of British state power. Less grandiose, they were ultimately more effective than the *intendants* and governors of continental monarchies. For anyone who has had experience of the British customs, the arbitrary and intrusive power of the excise authorities has a chilly plausibility.

This picture of a powerful British state more or less complements the picture of British nationalism as a constructed yet aggressive force, painted by Linda Colley.[53] For Colley, the nation's identity was forged in the eighteenth century by a resurgent Protestantism and armoured by powerful elites, many from Scotland and Ireland, who 'bought into' the British state at the centre in their alarm at the rise of radical and Catholic dissent. Lest the picture of the militarized nation at arms of the Napoleonic period should be dissipated by visions of *Pride and Prejudice* or *Middlemarch* where a red coat was no more than an exotic fashion accessory, we should remember the extensive use of the militia against working-class radicals in the 1820s and 1830s. More to the point, we should remember the way that Anglo-Saxon militarism made the map and remade the landscape of the Gaelic Highlands in the

eighteenth century; how in nineteenth-century Ireland powerful resident magistrates, fortified by the army and a paramilitary constabulary, tamed agrarian dissent. The further from the centre both geographically and in terms of social class, the more authoritative, militaristic and intrusive the power of the British state. The naval despotisms of the Australian colonies, the Kaffir Wars and Lord Somerset's satrapy at the Cape of Good Hope in the 1820s, the extermination campaigns of the Maori wars, all remind us that the export of British militarism continued unabated at the very time from which historians have dated the rise of *laissez-faire* liberalism.[54]

This questioning of the liberal and tentative nature of the British state has also gone on at the other end of the period, though with less clear-cut results. Charles Townshend[55] has pointed to what he calls Britain's 'civil wars' of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly the Irish Troubles, but also 'police action' in Palestine and the vigorous response to working-class agitations during the General Strike and the Depression. To Townshend and other libertarian critics, British government has remained bureaucratic, closed and authoritarian. The supposed sharp distinction between military and civil, the apparent decentralization of police and judiciary, the presumed investigative powers of Parliament, are lawyers' and ideologues' feints to obscure the adamantine shape of British state power.

Now all this has many resonances for colonial Indian history. First, it helps to explain why in the first place this 'polite and commercial people' as a historian of the eighteenth century has characterized England,[56] came to establish an empire in the first place. The Company's state in India was, from the outset, a lawyer's and accountant's state set in a penumbrum of military institutions. The all-powerful collector has often been depicted as a benign white shadow of oriental despotism. Looked at from this new perspective, he was more like a tropical bastard of the English excise tyrant and the untrammeled Irish Resident Magistrate.[57] Even in the eighteenth century, rigid accounting methods and a strong interpretation of practical sovereignty powered forward the Company's boarders. It may be right, as Sir John Seeley and Peter Marshall[58] argued, that the British did not *intend* to annex Bengal, Awadh or Arcot. However, the very structure of the institutions of the Company made it difficult for it to share power, to devolve revenues, or to countenance what Lord Cornwallis called 'the corrupt principles of Asiatick government'. Under Wellesley and his successors that drive for power was reinforced by a constructive imperialism that mirrored the constructive

nationalism which Colley has glimpsed in the domestic scene. Indeed, the enemies were mirror images of each other. Tipu Sultan was a citizen of France; the Marathas were the 'plundering Frenchmen of India'. The rhetoric of liberation for small peoples, which the British employed to raise guerrilla movements against Napoleon in Portugal and southern Italy, was employed to justify the aggressive wars against Nepal and Burma. Early-nineteenth-century campaigns of extirpation against the tribal Bhils and the Santals mirror the campaigns against the Maori, the Kandians and earlier the Irish rebels of 1798. As one Indian officer wrote ironically in his commonplace book in the 1830s, 'Aborigines: a race' to be eradicated 'as soon as practicable'[59] or, as another one taking part in wars against the Kolis in central India had it a few years earlier, 'what great fun it is burning villages!'[60]

The two main agencies of British state power in India, the army and the police, both fit more easily into these new domestic models than once might have seemed possible. The Company's Indian army was a peasant army based on the fighting force of Frederick the Great. In methods of recruitment, discipline, and the creation of colonies in civil society, it bore some resemblance to the rural armies raised in Scotland and Ireland in the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth century.[61] The elaborate concern for the high-caste status of the peasant sepoy which led Bentinck to provide each regiment with two regimental Brahmins, like the regimental padres, mirrored the Protestant state's final coming to terms with Catholicism amongst its soldiers. It was not until the mid-nineteenth century that the British army became predominantly English, Protestant, urban and working class. The apparatus of the invalid colony (*thana*), methods of recruitment by village, the role of the Indian medical service, of trigonometrical surveying and local languages, have little resonance if we look at the exiguous forces of the English shires. But the same was not true of Scotland and Ireland. The Survey of India was anticipated by the Survey of Ireland which rendered Gaelic names into English.[62] The military intelligentsia of the Army Medical Service was recruited from a going concern which took young men from grammar schools and Glasgow University into the Scottish regiments.[63]

The Indian police too, which took form rather later, has some similar domestic and imperial antecedents, notably the Royal Irish Constabulary. An indication of the inter-imperial drift of ideas and organization can be found in the case of the Sindh Police[64] which was organized in 1842 on the model of the Irish Constabulary. Sindh police officers were

introduced into Hong Kong in 1867. Later, Hong Kong experience was drawn on in the fight against Bengali revolutionaries. The Royal Ulster Constabulary was closely involved in the struggle against he Bengal terrorism in the 1920s, while the Indian and British Special Branches both had distant kinship with the Department of Thuggee and Dacoitee.[65] At the level of ideology, the debate on criminality passed to and fro between metropolis and subcontinent with the latter often initiating change. Sleeman's lore on *thagi* and criminal tribes is often taken to be orientalism teaching by example. Yet the thagi scare found its niche in the domestic conceptual space created by moral panics about Irish tinkers or London 'garrotters' and the 'boweries' of the port cities in which congenital criminal elements were thought to congregate.[66]

The Company's state from 1773 to 1857, then, can usefully be seen as a fiscal-military state, though one displaying the classic symptoms of venality common to the continental European, rather than the British, version in Brewer's formulation. Private and public financial interests were inextricably intertwined. The Company and its agents battened on the revenues of the Indian states through the mechanism of the subsidiary alliance system. Some Indian commercial communities were parasitic on the Company's juggernaut. Officials complained in the 1790s that it was virtually impossible to get a decent interest rate in the bazaar because the Indian merchant community always knew exactly what was left in the government treasury.[67] Even if the absolute percentage of British India's GDP consumed by the military apparatus was much less than in the more developed European despotisms,[68] the pressure on large areas of the peasant economy was excessively severe. Indirectly, through 'the tribute', and directly through the overseas use of the Indian army, the Company's state helped to sustain the domestic military-fiscal machine.

The Strange Death of the Military-fiscal State

However, by putting Britain and India together, we also begin to glimpse an answer to the question that has begun to worry British historians since the Brewer–Colley thesis took root: 'what happened to the British military-fiscal state between 1820 and the Anglo-Boer War?'[69] For it is difficult to deny that state expenditure as a proportion of GDP did fall during this period, to revive only right at the end of the century. One answer is that it was really only in England and the lowlands of Scotland, that the military fiscal state was dismantled. At this very time it was being exported to the peripheries, to Highland Scotland, Ireland and

India. The Indian peasant bore a heavy part of the costs of Britain's world role which the British people were not prepared to bear. Lord William Bentinck's reigning in of military expenditure in the 1830s was rapidly reversed by his successors.[70] The bankrupt Company's Indian government was renewed in 1834 so that the domestic state need take no responsibility for it. In this interpretation India and some other parts of the Empire thus 'took delivery' of Britain's military-fiscal state. Up to a point, and mainly before 1860, this argument has much to recommend it.

The second transformation which overtook the domestic British military-fiscal state between Lord Liverpool and Lord Rosebery was decentralization. Direct state control was exchanged for government by an enlightened local Whig aristocracy. As Harling and Mandler[71] have suggested, reform in the 1830s was designed to prevent public disturbance by locking the middle classes and populace into a new managerial form of the Whig state. Third, the rhetoric of criminality was increasingly employed to create a public opinion which, it was hoped, would obviate the need for intervention by the militias and replace the draconian legal system of the eighteenth century. So, in Britain, Wellington's oligarchy was replaced in 1830, not by middle-class liberal government, but by a new and more 'efficient' Whig paternalism.

The broad sequence of events in India followed this pattern, with the striking exception that taxation did not fall in the short and medium term. The imperialism of aggressive despotic 'benevolence' common to the administrations of Lords Cornwallis, Wellesley, Minto, Hastings and Amherst ratcheted up the revenues and intervened militarily both inside and outside India. After 1828 Bentinck, however, tried to replicate in India several aspects of the new efficient whiggism. He briefly restricted military expenditure and moved to conciliate Indian interests, while building an ideological framework for dealing with 'criminal tribes'.[72] In India, however, the militarism of the state was not yet diminished, and the men of 'broad acres' did not receive the stamp of approval of the colonial government until after 1857.

Again, at the end of the century, 'Curzonism', as the Indian press called it, fits with the renewed growth of the British state after 1885, which has been charted in a recent book by Jose Harris.[73] The new ideology of empire projected the Indian criminal tribe, the outcast of London, and the disease-ridden slums of both colonial and metropolitan cities as sources of disorder. The state had begun to expand again to pre-empt disease and social conflict.

Through all these phases Christian moralism influenced the agenda. But in each case the projection of state power took different forms. In the 1840s it was represented by the Department of Public Instruction and the Thuggee and Dacoitee Department, both agencies designed to domesticate the savage at his own expense. Native rulers were supposed to pay for the campaign against the stranglers; villages saved up for their own schoolmasters. In the late nineteenth century, the ideological direction which led to Curzonism in India and the drive for 'National Efficiency' in the United Kingdom took up eugenics and race building as its secondary ideology.[74] Its instruments were public health, public works and the taxonomizing imperatives of police anthropology. Later still, in the Depression, there began to emerge what John Lonsdale has called 'the imperialism of the welfare state', in which liberal-left ideas of social engineering became the new rationale of domestic state and empire. Propaganda disseminated through radio and press control, bureaux of information, medical and improvement campaigns and the war against the Red Menace were the order of the day. This feature of the British imperial state was most apparent in Attlee's Britain, Templer's Malaya and the Kenya of the Emergency.[75] But I think we can see marks of the imminent birth in India of this new, constructive imperialism before Partition and Independence aborted it. It was prefigured in wartime government intervention in the economy and in the official propaganda campaigns which Jonathan Israel[76] and others have begun to chart.

However, here one must enter a very important caveat. For the period 1765–1860, it is plausible to speak of the 'export' of large chunks of Britain's Napoleonic-era military-fiscalism to India. After 1815 this transfer helped the domestic state to disarm and 'civilianize' itself. Yet after 1860 there was a sharp divergence between what one might call the pretensions of Indian state power and its real, underlying strength. If we consider the percentage of India's GDP absorbed by taxation, then, wartime apart, the trend was consistently downward between 1860 and 1947. Even though regressive indirect taxes increased, land-revenue income was in free-fall over the whole period of the Crown's government. Overall 'the tax revenues amounted to a mere 5 to 7 per cent of the national income'.[77] This reluctance to tax India evidently reflected the great fear among India's rulers of provoking another mutiny, and their desire to placate an increasingly restive commercial and professional population. As the 1930 Simon Commission said, there were 'very definite limits to the extent to which an irresponsible Government

can force increased taxation on a poor country'.[78] The Indian government, at the very era of Curzon's proconsular triumphalism, had become a poor government in a poor society. Even the slow upward trend of taxation in Britain from the 1890s, which accompanied the new social expenditures and impact of the Anglo-Boer War, was not matched in India, until the burden was suddenly increased during the First World War. Of course, a large part of the colonial state's income still haemorrhaged to the Indian army and the Home Charges. But in terms of money, 'the sinews of power', the Indian empire of Lord Curzon's time looked relatively less militarily powerful and fiscally intrusive than it had in the time of his admired predecessor, Lord Wellesley.

These facts give rise to a number of reflections. First, they remind us how far the British relied on indirect economic manipulation, especially of the Indian currency and balance of payments, in order to profit from India.[79] Second, the low level of peacetime taxation throws the nature of 'war imperialism' in India into sharper focus. The galvanizing effect of the two world wars on Indian nationalism and peasant revolt was a reflection of the mighty shock delivered by a state apparently in retreat which suddenly turned and savaged its population, taxing, intervening in the economy, suppressing long-standing political rights and shooting people down in public places.

Finally, the fiscal stagnation of the Indian state in modern times throws light on the issues of ideology and social organization which were discussed earlier. As in England, the first attempt in India to cut back the big state and 'old corruption' of the Napoleon–Wellesley era was accompanied by an intensified rhetoric of public virtue. Bentinck's covertly Christian crusade for public instruction, his campaign against Indian criminality and stress on Indian agency (admittedly only the irresponsible agency of subordinate government servants), was in part an attempt to fill the vacuum left by the detumescence of the state. Later attempts to 'rally the moderates', 'find the natural leaders of society', 'initiate responsible government' or scientifically map the people of India, served a similar function. Though they cannot be 'reduced' to that function, these official discourses were valuable resources in a situation where colonial power was much weaker than it appeared. Now evidently, Curzon's empire was more than a tinsel darbar tiger. One need only remember the summary executions, police terror and 'flag marches' of 1857, 1919 and 1942. These can be understood partly as a consequence of this very tenuousness of state power. Incidents of extreme local brutality were a mirror of weakness in depth. But they could only

be employed sparingly. Even if he had wanted to, and Parliament had not been breathing down his neck, Lord Wavell could not easily have prefigured the bombing of Haiphong or the occupation of the Kasbah of Algiers in India; it may be possible to terrorize ten or even thirty million people for a time, but not three hundred million. Aggressive British imperialism in India resulted, therefore, from a curious amalgam of weakness and atavistic nostalgia for the palmy days of a Wellesley or a Colin Campbell. This ambivalent 'frightfulness' was perfectly exemplified in the character of its most notorious manifestation, General Dyer.

The Strengths and Weakness of Indigenous Avtars of the State

Thus the Indian state mirrored and reinforced the growth of the domestic state at important points up to the mid-nineteenth century. It was not an authoritarian oriental aberration. After about 1880, however, a long-term divergence occurred. The Indian government, notwithstanding some brutal interventions, came to have less and less purchase on Indian society. By the twentieth century its power to tax seemed to be withering away in a manner which almost brings to mind late Ching and Kuomintang China, rather than its domestic exemplar tutored by Lloyd George and Stanley Baldwin. And despite the short reign of Nehruvian socialism, the ideological and fiscal purchase of the republican state has never really regained its clout, even during periods when India's economy has burgeoned. However, the reasons for this divergence must be found to a significant degree in Indian society itself and in its own ambiguous inheritance of state power. For in India, this strongly-weak or weakly-strong British state existed in the midst of indigenous forces. Much can be learned from metropolitan historiography. But any attempt to subsume Indian history into the history of imperial institutions or political discourse is patently self-defeating. For we need to consider both the indigenous inheritance of the Indian state, and the pattern of class formation within Indian society under colonialism which appropriated this foreign political apparatus. What was the contribution of Indian 'statishness' to the hybrid?

By comparison with the orderly Chinese district gazetteers or even the detailed village censuses of births and deaths which were characteristic of late-pre-colonial southeast Asia, the Indian inheritance of the state might seem sickly, perhaps confined to the 'revenue line'. Yet the Company state drew heavily on the personnel of the late Mughal system.

In north India, men from the old office-holding families of Bengal, Bihar and Delhi continued to occupy the middle and lower ranks of the administration.[80] They were brought up in a tradition of dispassionate state service which had been established by Abul Fazl. This transcended their loyalty to any one ruler or dynasty. Writers, clerks and intelligentsia of this cast of mind did not see themselves as 'collaborators' but as men who perpetuated the irenic rule of Akbar under his successor Shah Alam or Akbar Shah, even if the emperors were temporarily subordinated to the *firangi* Diwan of Bengal.

If the British introduced the new statistical ethnology and methods of survey and mapping, there were indigenous forms of anthropological knowledge which could be adapted to the foreign political aims relatively easily. The 'Institutes of Akbar', a flexible mix of maxims for kingship, Islamic ethnology and revenue and military details, spawned a range of more local imitations in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[81] These in turn provided much of the indigenous framework for the colonial knowledge of the district gazetteers. Let us take another example, police reporting, which has received much attention recently as the matrix on which colonial ideas of race and criminality were based. These documents have a clear origin in the daily reports of the police chief of the pre-colonial city, the 'Akhbarat-i-kotwali'. A year's worth of these survive from the city of Lucknow for the years 1799–1801.[82] They show that Indo-Muslim officials used caste names, classified groups as plunderers and malefactors and to this extent anticipated the knowledge of the colonial state. However, these attributions were not fixed, essentialized or organized into hierarchy. Castes were not always regarded as salient. Sometimes a profession, a city quarter, a great man's retinue were mentioned instead of a man's caste. Many aspects of the supposed 'colonial discourse' on matters of crime, caste, thagi, sati and infanticide were anticipated by the Indian state and its administrators. The British element served to routinize, to fetishize statistics and to force these materials into international hierarchies for racial value. Mughal and late Mughal governments, therefore, deployed discourses of benevolent rule and established institutions of surveillance which could be manhandled into use by the colonial rulers. On the other hand, for all their apparent centralization of resources, Indo-Islamic governments always faced problems in keeping the revenue flowing in. Even if there remains a vigorous argument about the real percentage of agricultural resources extracted by the Mughal state, it cannot be denied that powerful intermediaries had intervened to syphon

off much of that product by 1720.[83] The British carried off a dubious prize when they seized the Indian state system. The lineaments of a bureaucracy and a system of knowledgeable rule existed. But the flow of revenues was not easily guaranteed. If the state buckled at the level of the village magnate, a steady flow of income could be converted into an absolute famine in the course of one season. This was what happened in 1857–8, and in a grander parabola, it was what was to happen to British imperial finance as a whole after 1860.

In the course of the nineteenth century, the inheritance of indigenous state systems inevitably weakened. Even the village registrars and watch-and-ward functionaries were set to novel tasks by a more bureaucratic policing. At the same time, the Raj developed a small but significant constituency of supporters committed to the notion of order which it promulgated. This went beyond interested conservative landed magnates to middle-class civil servants' families, Indian subalterns in the army, businessmen in major cities, Eurasians and some Indian Christians. This wedge of opinion represented, again, not simply collaborators but a political culture of loyalism, which we have ignored too long.

However, the relative solidity of the colonial state as a presence if not as a taxer and spender, must also be explained by other and deeper social processes which represent a fusing of the British and the indigenous elements in the formation of classes and dominant ideologies. I am referring to what might be called the expansion of 'respectable' society and here invoking words such as *ashraf, bhadralog, bhallalog.* This was an economic as much as a social process. These processes encompassed the growth of a more stable, settled and hierarchical India at the expense of the unsettled, the popular and the fluid. It was seen in the subordination of tribesmen, who saw themselves as 'rajas', to cultivators from the plains,[84] who saw themselves as aspiring 'twice-born'. It was often accompanied by the reduction of the social space in which women could act independently.[85] It saw the rise of the respectable in religious sects at the expense of the exotic, the erotic and the transgressive. In Islam, it saw the domestication of religious syncretism by the forces of purism from both the modernist and the integralist wings.[86]

Of course, at the level of the history of political events, some of these economic and ideological formations came into conflict with the colonial state. We only need to think of the Gurukul faction of the Arya Samaj or the Deoband school, or agitations against taxation by rich peasants

such as the Gujarat Pattidars. But at another level, the rise of the 'respectable' provided allies, infrastructure and compatible ideologies for the state, colonial and post-colonial. Much of our literature recently has been in danger of exaggerating the significance of the enemies of the state at the expense of studying the processes which were able to entrench it firmly in Indian soil.

Yet here also lies the explanation for the limitations of the state, especially in its fiscal aspects, which were mentioned earlier. The compact between the state and the dominant elements of civil society, substantial peasants and the commercial communities, was dependent on the state's leaving much of a poor society's resources in its own hands.[87] The benefits of the weak economic growth which took place in the late nineteenth century appear to have been absorbed by the respectable and dominant sections of the population. They went neither to the government nor to the mass of the population. In this less-than-benign neglect, the British were shrewd. When they taxed directly, they stirred up trouble. Most of the successful agrarian agitations of the later nationalist period, such as the Kaira or Ahmedabad movements or the 'no-rent' campaigns of 1931, were actually 'no-revenue' campaigns in which relatively comfortable revenue payers led movements to fight off the state's attempts to tax them.

Gentlemanly Capitalists and Twice-born Usurers

Here attention must be given to one final point of contact between modern British historiography and the Indian world. That is the debate about 'gentlemanly capitalism' and the British economy at home and abroad. The thesis has been advanced by P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins.[88] It argues that the role of industry in the British economy and society has been exaggerated. More important was an ancient compact between commercialized landowners and financial services which dominated the domestic political scene from 1688 to the 1960s. It was this gentlemanly capitalism rather than a search for industrial markets and raw materials that dominated British imperial activity whether it be in eighteenth-century India or nineteenth-century Africa. This argument fits broadly with work by Stone,[89] Cannadine[90] and others which shows that the British elite was stable and land based rather than industrial, that services, and the professions were more important than manufacturing, and that the landed interest had a much longer run of political influence than has commonly been recognized in both domestic and foreign policy.

The 'gentlemanly capitalism' thesis also has many resonances for

Indian history. India's conquest was, after all, driven by the concern of Company servants to maintain the value of East India stock by syphoning off India's land revenues into the balance. Industrial supply and markets were very much a consequence and not a cause of this territorial expansion. The apparatus of agency houses, managing agencies, railway stock and Indian financial instruments was designed to cream off a surplus, not to make productive investments in India, least of all to forward rapid industrialization.[91] The lethargic performance of British business after the 1880s is redolent of a rentier class pretending to be businessmen. Overall, the moralistic anti-egalitarian ethos of the civil service and army and the hostility of the Anglo-Indian establishment to new wealth, fits well with the 'gentlemanly' part of the equation.

So, too, the penchant of the British authorities for the Indian gentleman with broad acres, especially after 1857, has been amply documented. It reflected social preference as much as it was a political tactic. Yet here again what is most striking is the convergence of tendencies which derived from the British centre with social conditions in the subcontinent. India had its own form of 'gentlemanly capitalism' which could root the domestic graft. Late Mughal India had seen a series of compacts between Bania capital and the systems of political control associated with Indo-Islamic government. Sanjay Subrahmanyam has called the resultant political entrepreneurs 'portfolio capitalists'.[92] British rule swept away these forms and many powerful families of foreign and inland traders were ruined by colonial monopolies and the invasion of British produce.[93] However, an important feature of the Indian situation by comparison with many other colonies was the extent to which the institutions, mentalities and functions of the bazaar and the Indian family firm survived the colonial transition and found a niche in a hostile colonial system.[94] This was truer of inland areas and Gujarat, than it was of Bengal or Madras. It was also truer of small-town and rural usury than it was of the financiers of artisan production or international traders. Nevertheless, some of the institutions of colonialism—the Company bond, post office and later inland banks—did provide a safe haven in which Indian usury and commercial capital could invest its profits. Before 1830, large sums of Indian money flowed into Company bonds.[95] It was this that powered the forward thrust of British military fiscalism and private trade. Soon joint stock banks spread rapidly across the subcontinent. At first these were Anglo-Indian operations with a few Indian shareholders, but later, Indians founded and ran banks themselves.[96] At the popular level, the post office system became the resort of hundreds of thousands of smaller lenders who creamed off the profits

of landowning or petty commodity trade and usury into safe havens for regular interest. The borrowers and lenders were predominantly upper caste.[97] Their status had given them better rates of interest, the appearance of creditworthiness and extra clout in town bazaar and village market. British gentlemanly capitalism, therefore, fed off, but also tended to perpetuate, a range of twice-born usury capitalists in India. It was, of course, official concern that this slow class formation would alienate Muslims and less canny landholders which gave rise to the Punjab Land Alienation Bill of 1900, and many other attempts by provincial governments to restrain the moneylender and 'non-agriculturalist'.[98] Officials usually cast their discussion in terms of caste and tribe. In fact, the tendrils of capital constantly broke through these official boundaries. Brahmin pleaders could be moneylenders as much as local landlords could be commodity traders. It is not necessary to believe that the commercial classes or the bazaar prospered overall under colonialism; or even that family fortunes had the kind of stability enjoyed by some of Britain's gentlemanly capitalists. What was important was the fact that the denizens of the bazaar survived the colonial onslaught relatively better than either the old ruling classes or India's artisans and peasantry.

This chapter began with the observation that British policy and British institutions have remained important explanatory devices for practically all arguments about change in India, at all levels in society. Yet, outside the realm of high politics, understanding of the British element has widely become attenuated to the point of caricature. Consideration of some features of recent British historiography could, it has argued, revitalize aspects of Indian history. The Britain thus recovered—a providentialist Christian, authoritarian and gentlemanly capitalist Britain—would be easier to match with some of the tendencies we have come to see in British India. There are two qualifications. First, we must avoid new essentializations. We are dealing with a long period of British and Indian history and two societies in great turmoil in which every idea and every structure was constantly in contest. The Britons who did not fit these models: liberal critics of Empire, humanists, socialists, working-class people and industrialists, should not be ignored. It is the complexity and questioning nature of the new British historiography which should be taken on board, not its conventional wisdoms of today. The other qualification is more important. While no area of Indian life was too lowly or too intimate to be subjected to the powerful and distorting influences of colonial rule, structures and ideologies

of the Indian past remained vital. It was the conflict and amalgamation of these two elements which have determined the nature of colonial and modern India. Many recent historians have stressed conflict. This chapter has stressed two conflict-ridden convergences. The first is the confluence of Indian ecumenical debate and British crypto-Christian public doctrine which formed the modern Indian public sphere. The second is the convergence of the authoritarian and statist aspects of Britain, away from its metropolitan centre, with the powerful disciplining and settling processes unleashed within Indian societies before and during colonial rule. Between them, they created the landscape of modern India: an aspiring state, but one built on a shifting alliance of local people of substance; a state which could count on a general level of compliance and even acquiescence in its ideological projects, provided it did not entrench too much into the resources of its more substantial subjects.

Notes and References

1. This has been more notable in issues of 'high' politics, crime and criminality. A contextualized intellectual history of Anglo-India still does not exist; the tilt to 'cultural studies' has, if anything, distracted attention from the need to treat the political ideas of colonial Indians and their rulers.
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3. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990), but see also, Rosalind O'Hanlon, 'Historical Approaches to Communalism: Perspectives from Western India', in Peter Robb (ed.), *Society and Ideology. Essays in South Asian History Presented to Professor K.A. Ballhatchet* (Delhi, 1993), pp. 247–66.
4. But see Nicholas B. Dirks, 'Castes of Mind', *Representations*, 37 (Winter, 1992), pp. 56–78.
5. But see the more nuanced studies by David Lelyveld, 'The Fate of Hindustani', in C. Breckenridge and P. van der Veer (eds), *Orientalism and the Post-Colonial Predicament* (Philadelphia, 1993), pp. 201–8, and Javed Majeed, 'The Jargon of Indostan—An Exploration of Jargon in Urdu and East India Company English', forthcoming in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds), *Languages and Jargons* (London, Polity Press).
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7. Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women. Essays in Colonial History* (Delhi, 1989).

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9. Cf. Gauri Vishwanathan, *Masks of Conquest. Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Columbia, 1989), but see also Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago, 1992).
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13. Jose Harris, *Private Lives; Public Spirit. A Social History of Britain, 1870–1914* (London, 1993).
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15. A glance at the records of the major missionary societies, especially the CMS and the LMS, reveals how closely their organization mirrored the official mind and organization of colonial bureaucracy, see, e.g., *The Church Missionary Record* (London, 1830–45).
16. J.S. Grewal, *Muslim Rule in India. The Assessment of British Historians* (Calcutta, 1970); Francis Gladwin, *Ayeen Akberry, or, the Institutes of the Emperor Akber* (London, 1800), vol. I, translator's preface, iv–xvii.
17. See, e.g., P.J. Marshall, *The British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1970).
18. Peter Penner, *The Patronage Bureaucracy in North India. The Robert M. Bird and James Thomason School, 1820–1870* (Delhi, 1986).
19. *Friend of India*, 4 January 1849.
20. The Library of Entertaining Knowledge, a branch of the SDUK, was interested in Hinduism (it published *The Hindoos* [London, 1838] James Mill was on its committee.) For similar projects in India, see, e.g., 'On the Establishing of a Fanam [penny] Magazine', *Friend of India*, no. 7, March 1839.
21. For instance, Charles Grant's evangelical, *Observations on the State of Society Among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* ... (London, 1797), was included in the papers laid before the parliamentary committee on the East India Company, 1831–2, its understanding of Indian society was taken over into most official pronouncements on education hereafter, even though direct Christian education was not undertaken, see, H. Sharp (ed.), *Selections from*

Educational Records. Bureau of Education India. Part 1, 1781–1839 (Calcutta, 1929), passim.

22. Daniel E. Potts, *British Baptist Missionaries in India, 1793–1837* (Cambridge, 1967), pp. 169–204; F.C.R. Robinson, 'The Impact of Print in South Asia', in Nigel Crook (ed.), *The Transmission of Knowledge in South Asia. Essays on the Social Agenda* (Delhi, 1996).
23. *Friend of India*, 10 January 1850; *Mofussilite*, 17 January 1851.
24. See, e.g., the various schoolbooks published by the Calcutta and Agra School Book Societies in English and Hindi, *Bhugol Darpan Pathshalon ke liye [Geographical Description of England]* (Agra, 1841); George Nicholas, *A Grammar of Geography Adapted to the Education of Indian Youth* (Calcutta, 1838). The combination of empiricism and moralizing in these works profoundly influenced Indian primers, even those written and compiled by Hindus; see, e.g., Raja Shiva Prasad, *Vamamanoranjana* (rpt., Agra, 1856), a collection of moral tales for women.
25. See L. Wilkinson, 'On the Use of the Siddhantas in the Work of Native Education', *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1834, art. vii, pp. 504–19; I have briefly discussed Wilkinson in 'British Orientalism and the Indian "Rational Tradition", *c.* 1780–1860', *South Asia Research*, vol. XIV, no. 1 (Spring, 1994), pp. 1–9.
26. Ibid., pp. 7–8; see J. Ballantyne, 'The Pandits and Their Method of Teaching', *Benares Magazine*, vol. II (1849), pp. 353–9; also his *Christianity Contrasted with Hindoo Philosophy . . .* (London, 1859).
27. Sir Richard Temple, *James Thomason* (Rulers of India Series) (Oxford, 1893), pp. 129–30; cf. p. 72.
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29. Anon. (Ballantyne ?), 'Native Education in the North West Provinces', *Benares Magazine*, vol. VIII (1852), p. 169.
30. Avril Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, 1993).
31. Brajratan Das, *Bhartendu Harischandra* (Allahabad, 1982), p. 189 note; p. 190; for reactions to this newspaper, see *Benares Recorder*, 7, 19 September, 15 October 1847.
32. *Friend of India*, 18 October 1836, 24 August 1848; for other anti-Christian meetings, ibid., 23 September 1847.
33. Lata Mani, 'Contentious Traditions: The Debate About Sati in Colonial India', in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women. Essays in Colonial History* (Delhi, 1989), pp. 87–127.
34. *Friend of India*, 15 January 1835.

35. David Kopf, *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance* (Berkeley, 1969); R. Suntharalingam, *Politics and National Awakening in South India, 1852–91* (Arizona, 1974).
36. Katherine Prior, 'Making History: The State's Intervention in Urban Religious Disputes in the North-Western Provinces in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXVII, no. 1 (1993), pp. 179–203.
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38. 'Aspects of the Public in Colonial South Asia', in Sandria Freitag (ed.), *South Asia*, vol. XIV, no. 1 (1991).
39. Kenneth W. Jones (ed.), *Religious Controversy in British India: Dialogues in South Asian Languages* (Albany, New York, 1992), especially Jones, 'Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Critique of Christianity', ibid., pp. 52–74.
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42. E.g., Munshi Muhammad Faiz Baksh, 'Tarikh-i Farah Baksh', tr. W. Hoey, *Memoirs of Delhi and Faizabad* (Allahabad, 1889), vol. II, p. 44.
43. This statement is based on an initial analysis of the genres of Hindi manuscripts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries kept in British libraries with early lists of printed books available in the General Department (later Education Department) of the Government of the North-Western Provinces and sometimes published in the press, e.g., *Friend of India*, 5 April 1849.
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47. See, e.g., 'Advice of the Royal Army', a rebel tract in Urdu supposedly composed for publication, Home Miscellaneous Series, vol. 727, Oriental and India Office Collections (hereafter OIOC), London. The authenticity of this document has been questioned, but its tone and contents match quite closely many other rebel proclamations and statements during trials.
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60. H.H. Spry, *Modern India, with Illustrations of the Resources and Capabilities of Hindustan* (London, 1837), vol. II, p. 119.
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62. The two surveys are explicitly linked in L/Mil/5/402, Oriental and India Office Collections.
63. See entries under 'Universities of Edinburgh', 'Glasgow', 'St Andrews' in D.G. Crawford, *A History of the Indian Medical Service, 1600–1913* (London, 1914); Scottish names in Dodwell and Miles (no initials), *Medical Officers of the Indian Army 1764–1838* (London, 1839); more generally, Sir D. Campbell, *Records of Clan Campbell in the Military Service of the Hon. East India Company, 1600–1858* (London, 1925).
64. N. Miners, 'The Localisation of the Hong Kong Police Force, 1847–1947', *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. XVIII, no. 3 (1990), pp. 296–314.
65. Richard Poplewell, 'British Intelligence and Indian "Subversion". The Surveillance of Indian Revolutionaries in India and Abroad' (Ph.D. thesis, Cambridge University, 1994).
66. See, e.g., Bernard Porter, *Plots, Police and Paranoia. A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790–1898* (London, 1989); idem., *The Origins of the Vigilante State. The London Metropolitan Special Branch Before the First*

World War (London, 1987), Stefan Petrow, *The Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, 1870–1914* (London, 1990).

67. For example, 'by what means I cannot tell, the state of our Treasury is accurately known in the money market . . .', Mr Petrie to William Kirpatrick, 22 October 1798 (?), Wellesley Papers, Add. (Indian) Mss. 13,734, f. 89, British Library, London.
68. Cf. Dharma Kumar, 'The Fiscal System', in Dharma Kumar and Meghnad Desai (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of India* (Cambridge, 1983), vol. II, pp. 905–44.
69. Philip Harling and Peter Mandler, 'From Fiscal-Military State to *laissez-faire* State, 1760–1850', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. XXXII, no. 1 (1993), pp. 1–34.
70. Total serving in Indian Army 1825: 266, 291; 1834: 117, 634; 1844: 250,030. 'Do we need look further for the source of our financial embarrassments?', commented the leader-writer, *Friend of India*, 6 May 1847.
71. Harling and Mandler, pp. 20–2.
72. Radhika Singha, 'Providential Circumstances: The Thuggee Campaign of the 1830s and Legal Innovation', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXVII, no. 1 (1993), pp. 45–83.
73. Harris, *Private Lives*.
74. See, e.g., G. Searle, *Eugenics and Politics in Britain, 1900–14* (Leiden, 1976) and for Indian applications, P. Robb (ed.), *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (Delhi, 1995), especially Susan Bayly, 'Caste and Race in the Colonial Ethnology of India', ibid., pp. 180–233.
75. Timothy Harper, *The Colonial Inheritance. The End of Empire and the Making of Modern Malaysian Society* (Cambridge, 1998).
76. Jonathan Israel, *Communications and Power. Propaganda and the Press in the Indian Nationalist Struggle, 1920–47* (Cambridge, 1994), see also Sanjoy Bhattacharya, 'The State and the Communist Party of India, 1942–45. A Reappraisal', *South Asia Research*, forthcoming.
77. Dharma Kumar, 'Fiscal System', p. 905.
78. Loc. cit.
79. B.R. Tomlinson, *The Economy of Modern India, 1850–1990* (Cambridge, 1993), G. Balachandran, 'Towards a "Hindoo Marriage" Anglo-Indian Monetary Relations in Interwar India, 1917–35', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXVIII, no. 3 (1994), pp. 615–47.
80. Bayly, 'Knowing the Country; Empire and Information in India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XXVII, no. 1 (1993), pp. 26–7. M. Fisher, 'The Office of Akhbar Nawis: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms', ibid., pp. 45–83; see also his *Indirect Rule in British India. Residents and the Residency System* (Delhi, 1991).
81. Among many others, Khairuddin Khan Illahabadi: 'Tuhfa-i Taza', tr. C.F. Curwen as *Bulwuntnamah* (Allahabad, 1875), the same author's 'Tarikh-i Jaunpur', tr. by An Officer of the Bengal Army as *A Translation of the History*

of Jounpore from the Persian of Fuqeer Khyr ood Deen Moohummud (Calcutta, 1814); Mufti Ghulam Hazrat, 'Kifayat-i Zillah Gorakhpur', Mss. Pers. 104540, Oriental and India Office Collections; Bahadur Singh, 'Yadgar-i Bahaduri', Add. Mss. 30786, British Library.

82. 'Akhbarat-i-kotwali-i Lakhnau', Oriental Manuscripts, Bodleian Library, Oxford. I am grateful to Professor Muzaffar Alam for a partial translation of this document.
83. Richard Barnett, *North India Between Two Empires, Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720–1801* (Berkeley, 1980).
84. See Eugene Irschick, *Dialogue and History. Constructing South India, 1795–1895* (Berkeley, 1994), for a work which finally documents the interaction of the British and Indian elements without ignoring one or the other; also Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories. The Dangi Bhils in the Nineteenth Century* (Delhi, 1998), for the 'domestication' of tribals.
85. Vaid and Sangari (eds), *Recasting Women.*
86. Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, 1983).
87. D.A. Washbrook, 'Law, State and Agrarian Society in Colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. XV, no. 3 (1981), pp. 649–721.
88. P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism*, 2 vols (London, 1993).
89. L. Stone and J.F. Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540–1880* (Oxford, 1984).
90. David Cannadine, 'The Past and the Present in the English Industrial Revolution', *Past and Present*, no. 103 (1984), pp. 131–72.
91. R.S. Chandavarkar, *The Origin of Industrial Capitalism in India. Business Strategies and the Working Classes in Bombay, 1900–1940* (Cambridge, 1994); B.R. Tomlinson, *The Indian Economy 1860–1970* (Cambridge, 1990).
92. Sanjay Subrahmanyam and C.A. Bayly, 'Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India' in Subrahmanyam (ed.), *Merchants, Markets and the State in Early Modern India* (Delhi, 1990), pp. 242–65.
93. It cannot be doubted that many of the great firms of the immediate pre-colonial period collapsed, especially those of the coastal areas and those directly involved in cloth trading (interestingly, though, branches of the Jagat Seth and Omichand families, those most often cited as having been destroyed, survived in Murshidabad, Patna and Benares). But the point is that the bulk of India's capital and means of production remained in Indian hands throughout the colonial period, Indian merchants controlled the vast bulk of inland trade and moneylending, Indian financiers funded the Company armies, and when, for instance, they withdrew financial support in 1804, the Company's war effort ground to a halt. The internal structure of the bazaar and the Indian family firm survived and adapted to the heavy pressures of the colonial economy, facilitating the working of that economy to a large extent.
94. See, e.g., my *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* (Indian edn, Delhi, 1992); D. Rudner, 'Caste and Commerce in Indian Society. A Case Study of the Nattukottai Chetiars, 1600–1930', Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1985). The money dealers of Gujarat, the Arora and Khattri communities of

the Punjab and the Marwari *poddars* of central India were among many other commercial communities which survived into and even expanded their dealings during the colonial period.

95. The Indian money market raised large quantities of loans for Company bonds which financed the major wars of expansion through to the 1840s. see, e g , for lists of subscribers from Benares and Lucknow, Proceedings of the Resident, Benares, 15 September 1780; 8 October 1804, UP Central Records Office, Allahabad.
96. R.S. Rungta, *The Rise of Business Corporations in India, 1851–1900* (Cambridge, 1967).
97. A theme running through the evidence before *Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929–30* (Calcutta, 1930–2).
98. N.G. Barrier, *The Punjab Alienation of Land Bill of 1900* (Durham, NC, 1966); Imran Ali, *The Punjab Under Imperialism* (Princeton, 1988).

Epilogue: Historiographical and Autobiographical Note

In recent years anthropologists have become fascinated with the origins of anthropological knowledge and their own status as observers of alien societies. Anthropological monographs often now begin with autobiographical introductions setting out how their authors came into the field and with what emotional and intellectual assumptions they approached their informants. These introductions sometimes have a curiously confessional flavour. For historians, on the other hand, autobiography has usually been a mark of the end of a productive archival career when the historian is ready to write reflective works on 'what is history?' and to discuss the changes he or she has seen in the field over forty years. There are striking exceptions to this rule, such as Richard Cobb's *A Second Identity* and his other volumes of autobiography, which illuminate rather than memorialize his output on Revolutionary France. But the mood of historians' autobiographical musings is all too often elegiac, self-regarding and turgid.

This is unfortunate. Since the work of Hayden White, historians, like anthropologists, have become much more aware of their subservience to certain received opinions and ideologies and of the need to critique them. This mood is not restricted to self-consciously post-modernist authors. In the field of Asian history, the predominant theme has, of course, been the search for self-liberation from 'orientalism'. Informative scholarly autobiography is another, and potentially valuable way of approaching the question of how knowledge is produced, but few working historians give their colleagues much of a glimpse of how their own intellectual formations or religious and political beliefs have coloured their history writing until retirement looms. What follows is an attempt to answer concisely the question once put to me by the writer and historian Mukul Kesavan of how on earth I came to be doing detailed studies of north Indian cities. Why south Asians do south Asian history is much easier to fathom and its practitioners leave many clues in their texts. South Asian readers perhaps deserve to know a little more about the

foreigners who intrude, often irritatingly, into their construction of the national pasts.

Several of the British and Commonwealth historians of south Asia of the generation before mine, including John Harrison, Peter Marshall, Eric Stokes, Peter Harnetty and Peter Hardy, had direct experience of the last days of the British Raj, either as conscripts during the Second World War or as the children of expatriate business or administrative families. Several of the Americans of the same generation, notably Robert Frykenberg and Eugene Irschick, were children of missionary families. Others, like Bernard Cohn and Burton Stein, had become fascinated by India at a time when American interest had been turned to Third World development by the wave of internationalism which surged strongly at the time of John Kennedy's presidency.

These varied experiences indirectly moulded their historical writing. The pre-1960s generation of Britons had a more instinctive understanding of the administrative structures of colonial rule. Eric Stokes, for instance, viewed the Indian 'caste' and the African 'tribe' very much through the lens of the British district administration. By comparison, American historians of missionary background were drawn to Indian languages and indigenous sources and were more open to the study of Indian culture and religion even before anthropology took its leading role in the field of modern Indian history. For their part, the 'Peace Corps' generation consciously or unconsciously viewed the field from a developmental perspective. They stressed the experience of the village, the interplay of castes and the context of the 'little' Indian kingdom. All these were at the centre of debates during the Indian development decade of the late 1950s and early 1960s, when they carried out their fieldwork.

This type of direct experience was not open to the British or American students of my generation who were late products of the mass expansion of western higher education after the Second World War and apparently approached India from a purely academic perspective. Family experiences of overseas service were not unimportant, however. I had no direct exposure to the ideology of the ICS or the Indian army (though my then rather undistinguished Kentish grammar school had produced many officers of the Indian army in the 1930s). But there were many echoes of Empire in family conversations when I was growing up. My maternal grandfather, a London cockney, had fought as a private in Allenby's campaign against the Ottomans in Palestine during 1916–17. Like many soldiers, including Eric Stokes much later, he was struck by what he thought was the direct reflection of the Indian 'caste system' in

the imperial army. He reported in wonder that Hindu soldiers would discard their food if an 'untouchable' sanitary *havildar* had come anywhere near it, even in the middle of the Syrian desert. My maternal grandmother had been in service to Earl Haig's wife during the First World War and though she had left school at fourteen and gone straight into domestic service like her sisters, she was more literate and had a better general grasp of the world than some present-day British undergraduates. The whole family exuded the sort of upper working-class or lower middle-class Empire loyalism which John MacKenzie and others have written about recently.

A more direct influence on me was my father, Roy Ernest Bayly, who had served in the Merchant Marine, mainly with small independent Glasgow and Liverpool shipping lines, throughout the late 1930s and on until well after the Second World War. He was sent to sea as an officer cadet apprentice at the age of fifteen in 1936. This severance from his family meant that he was largely unaffected by its rather cloying Presbyterian Christianity, though he remained heavily marked by the work ethic of that tradition. His free thinking certainly informed my attitude to religion, which is relativistic and agnostic. My approach to Hindu and Muslim beliefs and practices has, I think, been both more distant and less reactive than that of Eric Stokes or Robert Frykenberg, for instance. Stokes largely omitted religion from his studies of India, possibly because it was too close to him. Frykenberg, by contrast, has continued to argue that Christians brought the concept of 'conscience' to India.

In the 1930s and 1940s my father sailed on innumerable voyages round the world, carrying copra from the South Seas, dairy products from Australia, jute from India and machinery from Britain to America and vice versa. Before I went to grammar school in 1956, I was well acquainted with the shape of the world map and had heard all about the longest bar in the world in Shanghai and the sound of what my father called 'gunny bag music' in Calcutta (this was the Indian music played full-volume over the tannoy system while the jute bags were being loaded down the ships' holds).

My father's view of India was favourable. He always remarked that his 'lascar' crews were hard-working and honest and he was particularly impressed with their punctilious personal cleanliness (something which he contrasted with the habits of his British and Irish seamen and his own children). He was less impressed with what he saw of the Raj. He found the British Hughly river pilots, with their starched uniforms and innumerable Indian servants, among the most 'high-and-mighty'

people he had ever encountered. He instinctively hated class pretension and, as an old liberal, he was suspicious of the British establishment, while at the same time being robustly patriotic. In the twee and conservative Tunbridge Wells of the 1950s and 1960s, where I was brought up, he often stood as a Liberal Party candidate in local council elections and was invariably defeated by the Tory candidates such as Miss Thesiger, sister of Wilfrid Thesiger, explorer of the Empty Quarter of Arabia.

Any racial animosity my father ever felt seemed to have been directed not against Indians or Africans but against the British working class, whose union militancy during the early months of the War, before the Soviet Union mobilized, he regarded as deep treachery. Mine was a family in which socialism was viewed not as a benign force for international equity, as it was until recently among even the most privileged of the Indian elite, but as the high road to tyranny and corruption. Toryism was regarded with almost equal suspicion, though my parents were moderately at ease with the 1950s' liberal conservatism of Macleod, Heath and Macmillan. My political preferences continue to fall broadly within that liberal political band which, since Mrs Thatcher, has been represented in Britain by the Liberal Democrats. But this inheritance sat uneasily with my sense that, despite its ultimate failure, historical analysis in the Marxist tradition is the only social theory which displays a rigorous interest in explaining historical change, which is for me, the overriding purpose of historical writing.

Oxford in the early 1960s, when I arrived there on a scholarship, was not particularly interested in modern south Asian history. The 'Modern History' announced by the History Faculty turned out to be the political history of the elites of France and Germany, or rather Paris and Berlin (I am told this has not changed much in 30 years). In the Oxford history of the 1960s much of the intellectual energy seemed to reside in early modern British history where Keith Thomas, Peter Burke and a group of pupils of Christopher Hill were beginning a 'turn' towards anthropology which reflected the influence of the French 'Annales' School. Historians of this generation had begun to move the most fashionable historical journal, *Past and Present*, away from an overtly Marxist stance to a more anthropologically informed social history. My own initial interest was in Soviet Russia which, at the height of the Cold War, seemed to be the dominant influence in our lives. I had begun to learn Russian and would almost certainly have become a historian of Russia at St Antony's College, but for two chance encounters.

The first of these was with a Balliol College contemporary, Derek

Davis (now Director-General of the British space programme), who persuaded me to accompany him to India during the long vacation of 1965. He had been to India in his 'gap year' between school and university, teaching at the Scindia School in Gwalior, and was determined to return there. A gifted linguist, he had developed a passable knowledge of Hindi during his time as a teacher. Our overland journey to India, through Turkey, Iran and Pakistan (where I spent a week at the Sandeman Civil Hospital in Quetta) created an entirely new academic interest. Rather than being dropped into the subcontinent from an aeroplane, it was fascinating to see the merging of one civilization into another across the whole range of societies from the Balkans, through Turkey and the Shah's Iran to eastern India. I became aware of the extent to which northern India remained part of a cultural landscape which spread into central Asia and the old Ottoman lands. But in the 1960s India also seemed to be indelibly marked by the British. Ordinary people would often come up in the street and say 'British times good times, *Sahib*'; equally though, we were several times stoned by mobs, whose leader on one occasion threatened to kill us, shouting 'You do not rule us now!' His rage had possibly been excited by the large solar *topis* we were wearing. India, nevertheless, seemed infinitely less alien than any of the lands through which we had passed between southern Europe and Zahedan, the penal colony on the Iran–Pakistan border, at least as far as institutions and elite mentalities were concerned. This strange conflict and contrast between the British (or now, American), the west Asian and the self-consciously Hindu in north India has been present in much of what I have written since, and the conflict still remains unresolved.

The second formative meeting was with Jack Gallagher, joint author of *Africa and the Victorians*, one bibulous night in the Second Quad of Balliol College. He found me some funds for my Indian trip and indirectly persuaded me to study the special historical subject on Warren Hastings and Bengal run by Lucy Sutherland and Ashin Das Gupta, which was then the sole opportunity to study the subcontinent in the Oxford History Schools. As it turned out, the subject was more to do with British factional politics à la Namier than it was to do with India, but Gallagher and Das Gupta did at least hold out hope that the subject held something beyond the aridities of parliamentary elections and the monumental tedium of the land revenue systems of Bengal. As I came to Indian history, moreover, I did so with early modern British history and Richard Cobb's startling insights into eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French history in mind. Encountering Cobb in that same Balliol

Quad after my return from a particularly taxing Indian research trip a few years later, I reported that I was suffering from acute dysentery. He replied, encouragingly, that all historians ought to have dysentery a few times because it would make them empathize more with the masses of the past.

When I began graduate work in 1966 the original topic for my doctoral research was to have been the politics of the eighteenth-century Maratha kingdoms of central India, and especially Gwalior, which I had visited the previous year. This would almost certainly have been premature because work on eighteenth-century India was only later to receive new impetus from Bernard Cohn, Burton Stein and Peter Marshall. Instead Dr Sarvepalli Gopal, who had by this time replaced Kenneth Ballhatchet as Reader in Indian History at Oxford, advised me to do a local study of the background to Indian nationalism in the city of Allahabad. Gopal was about to embark on his three-volume biography of Nehru and had a keen interest in Allahabad. The city had been the birthplace not only of Nehru but of Madan Mohan Malaviya and Purshottamdas Tandon, who represented another important strain of Indian nationalism besides Nehru's socialism. This other tradition Gopal represented as 'crypto-communal'. Gallagher agreed to the change of direction, though he would have been more interested in a study of Congress and the peasant movements in the twentieth century. At that time he was planning a book on twentieth-century nationalisms to parallel Anil Seal's *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, which was published eighteen months later.

The mid-1960s were the formative period of the so-called Cambridge School of Indian political history, an enterprise which received considerable support from the British Social Science Research Council and from Trinity College, Cambridge. Anil Seal, John Gallagher, Gordon Johnson, Christopher Baker, B.R. Tomlinson, David Washbrook and Francis Robinson were the Young Turks of this group. The comfortable level of funding for their project on modern Indian politics caused it to be dubbed 'The Yacht' in Trinity. The intellectual origins of this group of historians were, however, much more diverse and complex than its common representation in India as a kind of neo-imperialist backlash might suggest.

In my case, the aim of study in a particular urban centre in detail had a number of reference points in international scholarship beyond the borders of India. In the first place, the general trend in Oxford history in those days was towards the empirical study of local social formations. This was an implicit attack on what was thought to be the over-privileging of ideology and national politics by both the right and the left

of the immediate post-War generation. It was this climate which produced, for instance, John Morrill's early studies of the English civil war. Though Morill has long since moved back towards ideology, his first book debunked ideology and showed that the royalist and parliamentarian causes were both constructed out of alliances of factional groups playing out particular local conflicts. At Oxford, my contemporaries in Tudor studies, such as Peter Clark, had already moved towards the study of urban centres. My own more direct inspiration came from Merle Fainsod's study of the Stalinist archives of Smolensk and Paul Corner's study of fascism in Ferrara.

Another academic influence, though distinctly at second-hand, and possibly transmitted through the mediation of Gallagher, was Albert Hourani's work on the 'politics of the notables' in the Middle East in the late Ottoman period. I think my understanding of the politics of Allahabad in terms of the emergence of Congress-leaning publicists from within the skein of a 'politics of the notables' represented an exotic amalgam of some themes of early modern British history, nineteenth-century Arab studies and Cobb's French work. Readers will remember that Cobb also argued that the French *Armées Revolutionnaires*, far from initiating an ideological rupture in local societies, did little but steal a few pigs, burn a few hay-ricks and march on.

The atmosphere I encountered in Allahabad, and in Uttar Pradesh more generally, in the 1960s undoubtedly played its part in fixing this historiographical cast of mind. It was then a rather sleepy university and court town, still highly sectionalized between the old city of the Sufi Diaras and the traditional merchant community and the lawyers and property owners of the Civil Lines. Some of the latter still used the British title 'Rai Bahadur' on their letterheads, though now discreetly scored out in deference to the sensibilities of the still-young Republic. People apparently continued to register the strong political and social differences which had inflected the national movement. One ninety-year-old veteran of the early Congress told me that before the First World War politics was defined as the domain of the educated elites. He recalled how horrified he and his circle had been by the popularization of politics by Gandhi. My landlady Mrs Rhoda Gandhi, who had accommodated many British officers at the Finaro Hotel opposite the Allahabad High Court, once remarked that the power of the British was not finally broken until 1942 and then not by the Quit India Movement, but by the sight of American soldiers dancing and drinking in the streets. This had finally shattered the mystique of the White Man. A lawyer of Kashmiri Brahmin origin who still wrote Persian couplets told me that his ancestors

had served the Muslim rulers and then the British too, adapting well to their cultures, but all-along they had hated both sets of foreign invaders.

Communal hostilities were, indeed, very prevalent in Allahabad and Benares during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was easy to take them as 'age-old' hatreds, and this was how they were usually portrayed by the citizens of Allahabad long after the retreat of the British. But I think, in retrospect, that they mainly represented the consequences of the trauma of Partition and the emotions stirred up by the contemporary Indo-Pakistan wars. It was not that the Hindu population of the city was particularly unified in its attitudes, though. I remember one editor and politician, an adherent of the Hindu-Hindi camp in local politics formerly led by Madan Mohan Malaviya, denouncing the Nehru family as degenerate: 'Once they were camp followers of the Muslims. Then pen-pushers for the British. Now they have married Italians!' This canard directly echoed the sentiments recorded in the 1820s by the traveller Bahadur Singh (a Kayasth of the writer caste) about the mongrel character of the Kashmiri Brahmins.

On the surface, it seemed to me unlikely that places like Allahabad were ever energized by a homogeneous, altruistic and ideologically driven movement for independence, though this judgement probably reflected the cynicism of youth on my part. It is quite difficult for historians to envision patriotism and public service; graft and interest seem more obtrusive. This is one reason that I wrote the Radhakrishnan Lectures which appear in this volume. At all events, local factions, interests and cultural differences seemed to crowd the horizon. Even when I travelled outside Allahabad, the politics of the notabilities seemed still to be in full swing in a place such as Almora, where we once holidayed. Here a big urban *rais*, or boss, of Gujarati mercantile origin, ran the local moneylending business, controlled much of the local housing, operated a black economy with the forest officers and had at his beck and call lawyers and literary men. It all seemed very much like Allahabad in the 1880s. Even the local newspapers in these Uttar Pradesh towns of the 1960s seemed still to be obsessed with caste and faction.

In retrospect, though, the almost Victorian feel of the 'civil society' of Allahabad was as interesting as its Hindu and Muslim institutions. Douglas Haynes has been quite right to point to the pervasive liberal discourse of Indian nationalism. Even in the 1960s Allahabad public life was not particularly state centred. It revolved around English-speaking professional mores and the concept of public service which was lightly inflected with the indigenous concept of service, *sewa*. This civil society

revolved around the rituals of the High Court and the production of ancient local newspapers such as the *Leader* and the *Pioneer*. It resided in the Rotary Club, the Lions Club, the Servants of India Society and a host of voluntary associations, libraries and college managing committees which exuded a kind of Indian Anglicanism. Even official India seemed to be permeated and constrained by it. When I first met the Commissioner of Allahabad Division, he was delighted to meet me because I was a historian, proceeding to give me a lengthy analysis of recent findings in Babylonian archaeology. Even my interview with the Allahabad CID about my research status had a kind of enlightened amateurish (if not P.G. Wodehouse-ish) feel about it. The police jalopy lurched into the drive of Finaro Hotel, apparently at its last gasp. The interrogating officer sat me down in a chair, opened his notebook and polished his spectacles, which instantly disintegrated in his hand. The interview proved less than intimidating as the unfortunate man could not read any of the relevant documents. To prove my bona fides, I passed a copy of a section I had written about the Congress meeting of 1888 at Allahabad in front of his sightless eyes. He muttered, 'You are doing a beautiful thing!', and hurriedly left.

The most abiding impression of north Indian cities in the 1960s and 1970s was the general lack of conspicuous consumption and the flaunting of wealth which is now the norm. Nehruvian socialism and secularism remained the dominant ideologies, but these were underpinned by a generally humane civil society. It is now common for frustrated Maoists or Stalinists and right wing economists to decry this inheritance. China is better, they say. But is it better to have purchased a slightly higher growth rate and somewhat better village sanitation by mass murder and political suppression? Besides, rampant capitalism or confiscatory socialism would certainly have split the country apart in the first twenty or thirty years after independence.

In the 1970s and 1980s this ideological consensus was already breaking up. Conspicuous consumption in massive weddings parties and neon-lit hotels came even before economic deregulation. Saffron-clad lawyers appeared in front of the Allahabad High Court denouncing the 'Foreign Hand's' misdeeds in India well before the Hindu Right's spectacular rise after Mrs Gandhi's assassination. But some features of that era remain. In particular, India's vigorous and violent free press, now especially represented in news magazines, remains a standing reproach to the tame and controlled press of southeast and east Asia, and, dare one say it, the United States. It also contrasts rather well with the

trivial British press of the present day. These issues of political ethics, discourse and debate were lodged in my mind by experiences of the 1960s and 1970s, but it is only recently with *Empire and Information* and the present book, that I have made much of them.

In practice, the 'Cambridge School' of the 1960s was unified by very little except its distrust of large, abstract categories and the fact that its members all spent time in the fenland town (I did not go there until 1970). This anti-ideological stance could, of course, be represented as 'neo-imperialist' in that it rejected both Marxist and nationalist teleologies. Gallagher indeed was a defector from the pre-War hard left. But I personally have always been attracted to the rationalistic idea that there ought to be some primum mobile in history. It seems that classical Marxism (unlike Weberianism, let alone the doctrines of Foucault and post-modernism) does at least try to provide a real explanation of historical change. In other words, it is the only truly *historical* theory in the sense that it can account for social and political development. Yet when practised by all but the most outstanding writers, such as Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, historical materialist accounts always seem to lack depth. They are also counter-intuitive as far as our own understanding of the world is concerned. The link between 'superstructure' and 'infrastructure' does ultimately seem to be too nuanced, too indirect and too subtle to be represented even by the notion that 'in the final analysis', relations of production represented the key level of historical causation. They might, or they might not. In my own work, I have consequently tacked between neo-Marxian and neo-Weberian approaches. Henri Stern of the Centre d'Etudes de l'Inde in Paris once demanded, with Gallic purism, that I choose either one or the other. That would violate my understanding of reality. Like one of my Elizabethan ancestors, poised uneasily between Rome and Geneva, I refuse the choice on grounds of conscience and experience and because all our knowledge is itself so unstable.

Eric Stokes, who had a considerable influence on my work after I went to Cambridge in 1970, had similar problems in reconciling materialist historical interpretation with the study of ideology. He resolved it by keeping the two intellectual domains quite separate and registered formidable achievements in both. *The English Utilitarians and India* is still one of the very few classics in our field. But one can hardly imagine anything more different from its grand structure and compelling rhetoric than the detailed studies of rent rates and soil types which were later to appear in *The Peasant and the Raj*. Stokes's encyclopaedic knowledge

of the different north Indian localities certainly helped inform my approach in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*. More important, however, were his self-reflective commentaries on the intellectual origins of his own historical writing and that of his colleagues. This appeared in his letters and conversations, but rarely in his formal papers. It is the experience of writing Stokes's memoir for the *Proceedings of the British Academy* which set me thinking about the various influences that have impinged on my own work.

The Cambridge School of the 1960s, however, was not only suspicious of rigorous historical materialism, it was dismissive too of the old liberal imperialist doctrines of the progressive development in the colonies of the Westminster model of democracy. This stirred a good deal of outrage among the older generation of colonial civil servants and their families in Britain, just as the treatment of nationalism infuriated many in India who looked back to the Golden Age of the Freedom Struggle. I still remember the response, many years later, of members of the public to my hanging of a picture of Subhas Chandra Bose, hero of the Indian National Army, in the last room of the National Portrait Gallery exhibition on 'The Raj: India and the British 1600–1947' (1990). Several Indian visitors remarked that we had marginalized Bose and the latter days of the freedom struggle. Much more furious was the reaction of British visitors (and not only of the older generation) who regarded it as an insult to the memory of the men, both British and Indian, who had died fighting the Japanese in the Second World War to depict their ally, Bose. Competitive nationalism still remains a powerful influence on popular historical understandings.

Members of the Cambridge School later contested the notion of 'culture' which was already in the ascendant in the United States. But the 'Cambridge School' was also internally split. Washbrook, Baker and I, all set out to challenge Seal's analysis of the emergence of Indian nationalism along the two parameters of caste and English education. Much of the work of the so-called Cambridge School was pretty rough, or, rather, *kachcha*. The significance of 'faction' in late colonial politics was never really spelled out, though David Washbrook has done much to elaborate the context in recent years, ironically in a neo-Marxist vein. Nevertheless, the disappearance of politics—high and 'animal'—from Indian historiography over the last twenty years is probably retrogressive. Why is it that historians have turned from politics at a time when Indian politicians are more powerful than ever in the disposition of scarce resources and in the generation of ideologies? Why has 'culture'

and 'discourse' replaced economic history at a time when international capitalism is carrying all before it in India, as elsewhere? The relative decline of political and economic history seems to me to represent a syndrome of traumatized denial among historians. The study of a small number of texts written up in post-modernist jargon seems a soft option compared with a closer and more rigorous engagement with these startling changes.

My historiographical move back into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries after 1971 was determined mainly by gaining access to a number of collections of papers in the hands of members of the old north Indian merchant families. I was allowed to see some of these in Allahabad, but by far the earliest came to light in Benares, which had been the hub of indigenous commerce in India between the decline of Delhi and the full establishment of British power in the subcontinent after 1820. Benares did much to form my view of colonial India. In the 1970s the city displayed many more signs of continuity and tradition than even Allahabad. Arguably, it had reached its peak of influence and prosperity in about 1790 and been in a kind of suspended animation ever since, kept alive by massive infusions of pilgrims' money and other forms of cultural patronage. The sepulchral atmosphere of the city has been brilliantly portrayed by Jonathan Parry in his *Death in Banaras*, and its cultural richness by Motichandra, Diana Eck, Sandria Freitag and Vasudha Dalmia. To be jostled by corpses passing down to a muddy and swollen Ganga, entertained by all night *qawwali* devotional singing or dispensed *lassi* from a massive brass pot presided over by a man so enormous and fearsome that he could be taken as a court executioner from the Arabian Nights, created the illusion of the historical longue durée which would have been impossible in most other cities. Kanpur was already a choked industrial centre, and even in nearby Lucknow the great Islamic monuments of the eighteenth-century court were already, in the 1970s, being allowed to fall into gentle decay as indifferent Hindu nationalists took power in the municipality.

Issues of continuity and change have dominated my disagreements with members of the Indian historical profession. These are to some degree doctrinal and political in origin, reflecting the tensions between liberal, Weberian and Marxian historiography. However, they also reflect differences of perception and experience. The English-educated elite of India, especially those who study in Europe and the United States, are likely to be struck by the great disparities of wealth between the West and their home country. They also ask themselves why they

must write in a foreign language, submit themselves to chilly foreign racialisms and constantly struggle against the sense of being marginalized, poor and dependent in the eyes of the outside world. It is this, I think, as well as Marxism and nationalism, which causes most Indian historians to stress so heavily the massive ruptures and distortions, psychological and material, caused by colonialism.

By contrast, for many western historians it is the stark contrast in the nature of post-colonial modernity between India and other parts of the world which is most striking. This leads them to stress continuities even across the ruptures created by the coming of colonial capitalism. It was the fact that even under British colonialism, Indians recruited from pre-colonial service and commercial communities continued to control the bulk of mercantile capital and title to land and to populate the lower ranks of the army, judiciary and police, which informed the theme of continuity in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*. This was not the situation in Latin America or Africa to anything like the same extent. The argument for some degree of continuity in Indian history was therefore always a comparative rather than an absolute one. This is a theme I have tried to take forward in my more general work on the British Empire. But this was not the only theme. *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* also contained a discussion of decline, change and social deformation. This has not been commented on very much, probably because it already seemed part of the historiographical canon.

The best way of beginning to resolve this question of 'distorted continuities', as Tapan Raychaudhuri once called it, is to ask why certain social, economic and intellectual forms survived, or were allowed to survive, the massive and disruptive impact of European government and western capitalism. The question is still worth debating. This is not only because, as I argue, the origin and nature of change ought to be the central concern of historians. In the Indian case, it is also rather important for voices to continue to question the neo-Marxist, nationalist (and predominantly Bengal-centred) historical paradigm which still dominates the field in its different versions. Indian historians often associate themselves with radical anti-establishment historians and theorists in the West. They are admirers of the Hobsbawms, the Thompsons, the Saids and the Foucaults. But what they sometimes fail to see is that they are also, in another guise, the equivalents of Tory historians: the guardians of the national flame, spokesmen of historical orthodoxy. For, in India that orthodoxy is still represented by the leftist, nationalist 'secular' establishment. For instance, the brilliant debates between Sumit

Sarkar, Amiya Bagchi and the Subaltern Collective, lit from this angle, sometimes seem like the inward struggles of the European national historical establishments with their academies and committees. All these historians fight fiercely, but agree on the main outlines of the historic advance of national rectitude. Non-Indian scholars are gradually, inevitably and appropriately losing the initiative in the production of historical knowledge to native-born Indian historians (many of them resident in the United States and Europe, of course). Yet foreigners will continue to perform the useful duties of the gadfly, stinging historical complacency on the rump.

Living in Allahabad and Benares during the 1960s impressed on me the importance of that other great debate in modern Indian history, the question of communalism. Nita Kumar has argued that the character of the city of Benares is 'Banarsi' rather than 'Hindu', and as far as popular culture is concerned that must be right. But elite Indians are sometimes oblivious to the symbolic frissons about religion, which foreigners pick up (the same of course could be said for the symbolic impact of Union flags or British military traditions in Catholic Ireland). As I have observed, well before Hindu revanchism became active on the political scene in the late 1980s, communal relations in north India were edgy.

On one occasion I took an ancient, cursive Persian-reading Muslim from Allahabad to help me with some of the commercial documents I had found in Benares. The last time he had visited the city was in 1913 to play cricket against Queen's College, Benares. We were very well treated in the old mercantile quarter in the city centre. The head of the family tried to put us at our ease on matters of religion by saying that in his house Jesus, the Prophet and Krishna were all revered. The elderly man's beard bristled and never stopped bristling until we returned to Allahabad where the familiar Islamic sights of the Mughal Khusru Bagh hove into view. Here he told me how much he had hated our trip. Benares was filled with 'Hindus and hippies'. Sentiments such as this were clearly the product of the lesions of the twentieth century, but at the very least they seemed to root themselves in a remembered and cherished past of difference and conflict. On the other hand, travelling in south India with my wife, Susan, during the early 1980s, and in constant discussion with her, I developed a different perspective on north India's history. Here I was transported to a land where the great Semitic God had quite recently been no more than 'Allah Swami'. He was one among a number of patrimonial cult divinities, just as one supposed Jehovah might have been in ancient west Asia, before he launched his grab for

absolute power. It was this conflict between the 'syncretic' and the inheritance of religious polemic that stimulated the thoughts which were later put on paper in the chapter on 'communalism' in this book.

Other external influences on my work in the 1970s and 1980s were the American models of historiography and the ensuing decline of European (and Bengali) class-based models of social history, at least outside India. The rise of the influence of American academic preoccupations began in the 1960s when 'political systems analysis' seemed the coming thing. It affected several of the contemporary studies of Indian political history to some degree, including *The Local Roots of Indian Politics*. Social science models of this sort became more prominent in the 1980s when a variety of Weberian paradigms, modified by American influences, were taken up by historians. The new debates centred around entrepreneurship and culture, especially cultural clashes in the construction of knowledge. Ronald Inden and Bernard Cohn both hailed the *Subaltern Studies* volumes, products of the 1980s and 1990s, as harbingers of a true indigenous and post-colonial historiography. What they were probably seeing, though, was a mirror image of their own cultural interests, now reflected through an increasingly cosmopolitan academic elite. The trajectory of *Subaltern Studies* from class and resistance to a concern with discourse and colonial knowledge really represented the replacement of E.P. Thompson with an Americanized version of Michel Foucault. This is what Sumit Sarkar has deplored in *Writing Social History*, his polemic against the 'disappearance of the subaltern' from *Subaltern Studies*, and the tendency of young Indian historians to try to be 'with it' by hitching their colours to the mast of post-modernism. Actually, if a true 'indigenous, post-colonial historiography' is coming into existence (and this is probably impossible), it is perhaps in regional universities and sometimes in regional languages and has little to do with the conferences, academic exchanges and refereed journals of the international elite.

My own work in the 1970s and 1980s resulting in *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, therefore, reflected the debates, especially in the United States, about entrepreneurship and community in India. As I explained in the OUP India edition of that work, my concern with merchant communities also arose from my discovery of the importance of 'old' commercial wealth in the politics of Allahabad. In retrospect, it may be that I exaggerated their importance because during the days of Nehru's Permit Raj, the old-style indigenous banks were again very prominent, having become flexible instruments for transferring (and sometimes

concealing) money. At all events, it is interesting that historian and informant, as so often, came into a kind of collusion to produce history. A correspondent tells me that a member of one of the Allahabad commercial families has produced a book citing both my monographs. The family has consequently now reached the status of a 'famed' family of local worthies. Such collusions and tensions in the relationship between the 'native informant' and the culturally and linguistically inexpert outside observer was one reason that I decided to work on the topic which ultimately produced *Empire and Information*.

Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars reflected many of the contradictions and unresolved tensions that afflicted the study of Indian history at the point when American influence was becoming more and more evident. It exposed a triangular tension between the actual experience of doing research in the Benares and Allahabad bazaars, the type of regional socio-economic history being done by Eric Stokes and his pupils at Cambridge, and the intellectual consequences of frequent visits to conferences in the United States during the 1970s and early 1980s. Its sister volume *Empire and Information* by contrast, reflects a tension generated between post-Saidean work on the production of colonial knowledge and that earlier social history.

Much of this epilogue has been concerned with the tensions inherent in historical writing. The tensions I have felt are those which arose from being a Briton working in India; a liberal with a reluctant penchant for Marxism; an empiricist who nevertheless believes that historical reality is constructed and that arguments are more important than the 'facts' of the old-style British historian. Similar tensions also pervade the wider field of Indian historiography. The field is populated by Indian nationalists reluctantly seeking jobs in foreign countries; materialists who are forced to accept the importance of religion; Bengali-, Hindi- or Tamil-speakers constrained to write in English; theorists and polemicists forced to pay attention to what is hidden in the Indian archives. Perhaps this tension and contention is what gives Indian history its dynamic appeal. As old certainties collapse across the historiographical landscape, Indian history writing seems to be coming into its own. This is precisely because it is by nature so complex, unstable and politically charged.

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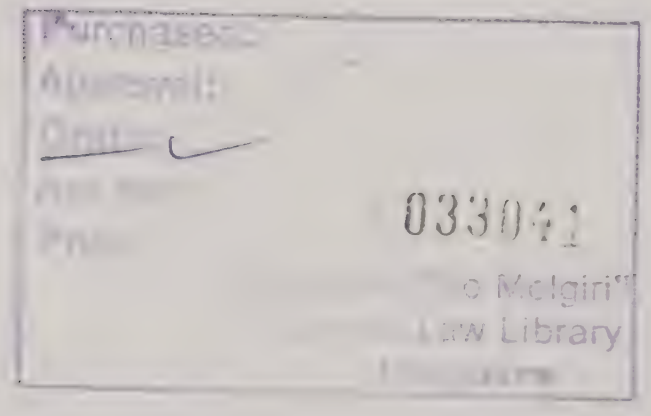
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This book, by a major historian of modern India, is indispensable for all who are interested in Indian history, culture and politics.

C. A. Bayly is Vere Harmsworth Professor of Imperial and Naval History at the University of Cambridge. His books include *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars* (available as an OUP India paperback), and *Information and Empire* (CUP, 1997).

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